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AS MUCH AS I DARE





LILY

*Elizabeth Theresa Vidal*

# AS MUCH AS I DARE

*The autobiography of*

FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE



COLLINS · PUBLISHERS  
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1938

THIS BOOK IS SET IN FONTANA, A NEW TYPE  
FACE DESIGNED FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE  
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To

M. C. M.

*When I asked you for your opinion of my portrait of you in this book, you said the impression was that of an amiable lunatic, a sort of Mr. Dick.*

*"Perhaps that's what I am. Anyway don't alter it. I like it."*

*If I have not stressed your earthquake tendency, it is partly because the foundations of this book would not stand the strain, and partly because I think that tendency is more familiar to the world in general than what you are pleased to call the "amiable lunatic" side of your personality which it has been my good fortune to enjoy for so many years.*

SUIDHEACHAN, ISLE OF BARRA.

September 12, 1937.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE <i>Eton</i>	II
CHAPTER TWO <i>Stonehouse</i>	33
CHAPTER THREE <i>Peacocks</i>	82
CHAPTER FOUR <i>Charles Hawtrey and Others</i>	121
CHAPTER FIVE <i>Compton Mackenzie</i>	162
CHAPTER SIX <i>Carnival</i>	212
CHAPTER SEVEN <i>Sinister Street</i>	237
CHAPTER EIGHT <i>Capri</i>	259



## ILLUSTRATIONS

LILY—ELIZABETH THERESA VIDAL	<i>Frontispiece</i>
AN EARLY GROUP AT ETON	<i>facing page 16</i>
EDWARD	,, 32
LILY	,, 32
FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE	,, 48
CHRISTOPHER STONE	,, 64
A GROUP AT STONEHOUSE	,, 80
SHINNER QUARTETTE	,, 96
EDWARD AND CHRISTOPHER STONE	,, 112
COMPTON MACKENZIE AT TWENTY-THREE	,, 160
LADY HAM, BURFORD	,, 176
6 NORTH STREET, WESTMINSTER	,, 192
FAY COMPTON AND ANTHONY	,, 208
COMPTON MACKENZIE IN 1915	,, 224
CASA SOLITARIA, CAPRI	,, 240
FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE AND NORMAN DOUGLAS	,, 256
EDWARD	,, 272





## CHAPTER ONE

### ETON

LILY STONE wrote to her mother-in-law in 1881:

I wish I could get away with Edward, but in a year or two I shall be free, for *I will have no more babies!* Faith is exquisite enough to be the last and greatest pet.

I was the exquisite pet of the moment, and her ninth child.

A few months after that letter, Lily's husband Edward, wrote to his mother:

Dear Lily has had a sad accident. Ironsides ran away yesterday in Burnham Beeches, when she was alone in the carriage, and she was upset and a good deal bruised, but no bones were broken, and beyond the shock to her system which in her condition may produce bad results, no special harm is done. Her face is a good deal bruised and swollen and there are slight sprains in the joints, but she was able to walk with help to Macro's cottage, and we got her back in a fly.

She did not, as you may imagine, sleep much last night, and we are trying to keep the house quiet that she may have a nap this afternoon.

I hope all will go well, but of course I am very anxious.

Later. She is going on nicely.

No wonder Edward was anxious about Lily "in her condition" seven months gone with her tenth child, in spite of all her resolutions. I remember well seeing Ironsides bolt among the school-children who were playing round a tree; I can still hear their screams. And I have a vivid picture of her being carried into Macro's cottage (which is little altered since that day), though Edward asserts that she was able to walk there. Perhaps the milder version was for the benefit of Granny Stone, who lived far away in Dorset and was easily disturbed.

Lily went on doing nicely and two months after the accident on September 19, 1882, her last baby was born, by a miracle a perfect child.

She writes, again to Granny Stone:

I am not a bit strong yet, but taking care of Baby is a fine excuse for doing nothing else, and he soothes me. I like to feel I am doing some good in the world, nurturing a future hero. . . .

I am so sorry you don't like the name of Christopher, but surely it has a lovely meaning and a good sound?

It happened like this. Mary (*Lily's eldest child*) was with me, and I said that I felt that the child's being preserved in such a wonderful way seemed to show he was meant to be something out of the common.

"Let us think of a name with a meaning . . ."

"What do you think of Christopher?" I said after a pause.

"Just what I was thinking of," said Mary.

A few minutes later Edward came in.

"Christopher!" I called out. "What do you think of Christopher?"

"How extraordinary," says Edward, "I was just going to ask you what you thought of it. It came into my head as I came through the garden gate."

We naturally thought that Christopher was to be his name, and we can only hope and pray that he may be worthy of it. We shall never allow any shortening of it.

Faith and Christopher sound well together, I think. He is a remarkably sweet child, as well as a very fine and healthy one, and it is pretty to see the worship he gets.

Here was a clear case of telepathy, and its vibrations reached London, for Octavia Hill was on the point of writing to suggest Christopher when she heard that it was decided. She was his godmother and he was baptised Christopher Reynolds in honour of Sir Joshua who was our multi-great uncle.

Lily's determination that there should be no shortening of his name was not respected, for after some years of Booboo, sometimes spelt Bubu, he became Christof, and now there are several million people who know him as "Chris." Though she might shudder at this diminutive, its implications would no doubt have delighted her. Whatever may have been her hopes for him, they could not have been more fantastic than his then inconceivable destiny.

He has a most sweet temper, *she writes*, but he is very nervous and sensitive, and wakes up in a panic sometimes crying in the most dreadful

terrified way. Like me, I think he dreams of run-away horses.

This is very likely and it is not surprising that he has always avoided horses. I do not remember his riding at all, except a quiet white pony when he was six years old, and that was led gently about at a walking pace. One of his most charming photographs is on this pony, Pip, with his sensitive little face wearing an anxious expression. I was never photographed on horseback, but I had and still have a passion for horses which has had little satisfaction since I was a girl. Horses went out of my life years ago and my enjoyment of them is vicarious but still intense. An afternoon spent with that great breeder and judge of horses, the late Señor Martinez de Hoz, at his farm near Maschwitz in the Argentine in 1934 was one of the spotlights of a South American visit, and indeed one of the unforgettable events of a lifetime. On a brilliant sunlit lawn we sat in easy-chairs while a long string of yearlings passed before us, each holding the stage self-consciously while the Señor appraised its points. The beauty of those exquisite thoroughbred creatures gave me a lump in the throat, as they went glistening by in the sunshine. There was no one else there but the Señor and his daughter, the English trainer, and about half a dozen grooms. Absolute peace and intimacy.

It is difficult to contemplate calmly the sufferings and courage of Lily through her married life, from the day when she was married at nineteen to Edward in Eton College Chapel till the birth of Christopher when she was forty-one in the red house that Edward built for her on the Dorney road. For fourteen years

Edward had the large boys' house at the corner of Keate's Lane, and it was principally on Lily's account that he gave up this profitable source of income, and retired to the Briary where their children could run barefoot in a good-sized garden. Lily feared luxury as intensely as she disliked pretentiousness, and she wanted her children to have a simpler life than was possible at Keate's Lane.

Christopher and I were born in The Briary. I have not many memories of it and Christopher can have none. Eton cemetery flanked it on one side, and I remember a transparent little girl who used to dance on a grave with railings round it. I watched her often from the nursery staircase window, but no one would believe that I really saw her. Nor would they believe that I saw fairies in boats when we went to Seaton for the summer, but there is no doubt that Christopher and I used to see little people in our grandmother's enchanted garden at Walditch in Dorset. Christopher supports me in this, and the fact is not surprising, since Granny Stone and her daughter Edith were psychic to a remarkable degree. They were pioneers of spiritualism and Aunt Edith did her automatic writing as regularly and with as little fuss as she cleaned her teeth. The house resounded with rappings and astral bells. *The Spiritualist* was read and forwarded to Lily, who was more influenced than Edward liked. He remained cheerfully sceptical, but indulgent so long as it was not taken too seriously. Lily was rather given to enthusiasms which he sometimes found it necessary to damp.

The coming of Christopher was at any rate the full stop on the regular succession of pregnancies which had sapped her life blood and brought her each time

near to death. In spite of perpetual warnings and even threats from the family doctor, the procession of children had gone steadily on, and a four years' interval between my brother Guy and myself indicated two or three miscarriages, not a period of repose.

Edward, kindest and best of men, was apparently incorrigible in this particular matter. He always, it was whispered, forgot.

Lily's mother, Mary Theresa Vidal, was responsible for the marriage, which was not a perfect union, but they were both by nature loyal and devoted. When Lily was seventeen she was lovely, with her dark smooth hair, her shining almond eyes and her faun's mouth. She was the only girl among six brothers, and because she had no sisters she had begged her mother to send her to school when she was thirteen. Mrs. Vidal was interested in the Tractarian movement at this time, and she found a school kept by a woman with somewhat advanced religious views, a woman who also possessed the compelling character and beauty of countenance which can make a girl's school-days heaven or hell. In Lily's case it was both.

Heaven at first, when she was a favourite, and the dear guest at many a secret prayer meeting, blissful recipient of tender kisses after heart to heart talks in the dusk when the tasks were over. This woman, with her magnetic eyes and her exciting spirituality, completely controlled the emotional life of the highly strung girl. Under her influence Lily actually went to confession before her confirmation, though it was an agonising experience which she swore she would never risk again. (Years later it became easy enough.) She was religious by nature and brought up in piety,



AN EARLY GROUP AT ETON

*(Standing, L. to R.): Ned, Willie, Mary, Maggie, Lucy.  
(Sitting, L. to R.): Lily, with Faith on knee, Guy, Edward,  
Frank, Ruth.*





but the ecstatic devotion, the worship of God through her teacher, became almost an obsession. It was a kind of heaven while it lasted; the warm love of her friend filled her with glowing innocent happiness, and it was so near her heart that she did not speak of it even to her mother, who had till then shared her most secret thoughts.

The shock came when she returned to school one term and went eagerly to greet her friend. There was another girl in the room who already had the air of belonging there, and she was casually introduced. Those magnetic eyes were cold, the kiss of greeting was formal and frozen, and Lily soon escaped to her room astonished and dismayed. When she returned home to Eton for good there was a sort of desperation in her gaiety. She was always high-spirited but now she seemed to be entirely frivolous. The little nun had been transformed into a butterfly. Most of the young gentlemen of Eton and the neighbourhood fell wildly in love with her: she flirted, danced and sang, and seemed to have no idea of anything but amusement.

Mrs. Vidal was disturbed by this new development in her daughter. She did not know of the deep hurt which had stunned the acute senses, of the shattering of an ideal which the girl had made the foundation stone of her life, but she did know that all this superficial gaiety hid a suffering heart. She also knew that Lily was inclining towards a cousin who was devoted and entirely ineligible and as impetuous as herself. Marriage with him could not be thought of. A husband must be found for Lily at once, a reliable person who could give her a good establishment. She had never, except in those schooldays, been out of her mother's sight, and needed special guarding, for

there was spinal weakness and an inherited delicacy of nerves. Mrs. Vidal herself was a martyr to *tic douloureux*, and her daughter was prone to devastating headaches. It was impossible to contemplate Lily being at any distance from her adoring parents.

So Mrs. Vidal looked round, and made her choice.

Edward Stone, son of a Dorset solicitor of some local eminence, was Lily's elder by ten years. Though he had gone from College at Eton to King's, Cambridge, and thence immediately back to Eton as a classical master, and his outlook might be suspected in consequence of being somewhat narrow, he was saved by his tastes and temperament from falling into the priggish groove awaiting him.

From early undergraduate days he had gone at every opportunity to the Continent, and revelled in the free air of France, tasting its food, sipping its wine with delight and refreshment, his spirit spreading wings that must be folded again in school time. He had the very qualities Mrs. Vidal was seeking. He was one of the most brilliant of the younger masters, he had a good background and he could be relied upon to protect the delicate girl, and as an Eton master's wife she would be *safe* in an atmosphere that was familiar.

Gently Mrs. Vidal urged on Edward that Lily was in love with him, her own grace and tact not forcing the issue, but implying by her delicate appreciation that in her opinion he would be an ideal son-in-law. Edward was flattered. He had always admired Lily, but it had never occurred to him that she could care for him. There was an obstacle; he wrote frankly of it. There was a lady in France to whom he had been engaged for some time, till a serious accident made their union impossible. She was now a hopeless invalid

but Edward still visited her, and had to confess that his affection for her persisted. (It was a pity that Mrs. Vidal kept this letter, for it was found by Lily among her papers at her death, after Lily had borne Edward eight children, and as she had known nothing about the lady in France the discovery was a shock.) Her mother had assured her that Edward was so much in love that it would be cruel to refuse him. Lily's heart was touched by such devotion from a person so exalted as Edward, but she was very shy of him. She wrote to her future mother-in-law:

It is very pleasant to be received so warmly, on trust, and I assure you I feel this ready affection from my heart. . . . As for me, it is quite impossible, you know, that I could do anything but love his mother, even if she had no claims of her own to be loved, but when that mother is so readily kind, and so easily pleased, I don't see how I can love her enough.

I have not arrived at calling him Edward, except by letter.

At what stage did she become "Lily" to Edward? He wrote to his mother:

Whether by plucking the unripe fruit and not giving it time to mellow and mature I have done irreparable mischief, I don't know; rather let me hope that I have only given the tree a shake rather too early, and that patience only is necessary. I hurried matters because I dreaded for her the harsh criticism of the world. Because I write calmly do not suppose that the feeling is a passing

one. The ground of my calmness is that I do look forward to the time when Lily will no longer doubt, but know her own mind fully. . . .

So Lily had doubts, but Mrs. Vidal must be forgiven for her plotting. Her anxious mind hovered about her beloved daughter, dreading the possibility of herself dying and being released from the eternal *tic douloureux*, before Lily was settled in a happy secure life. A long letter written to Edward's mother reveals the depth of her feelings.

Lily is ill; even she herself, for a wonder, admits to getting weaker every day, and tired also, besides the frequency of palpitation attacks and increase of headache. But there is no functional disease, the doctor says, only her pulse is a mere pretence, and the whole circulation so miserably languid, it is no wonder her heart and head suffer. There is a talk of her consulting Dr. Gully (later of Bravo fame<sup>1</sup>), but they fear he would go too fast with the water cure. At all events she must not be encouraged in "brave habits," but have the care and warmth with which she has always been surrounded. Mrs. Vidal winds up this letter with:

She has rather an anxious mind, and is not one to take life very calmly, but I feel happier day by day to think I can give her up and leave her, should it so please God, to such keeping. Last year when I believed, and hoped too, that my hour was come and the pain over, I was rather troubled at leaving her, feeling her to be so peculiar a character, and I feared unlikely to be

<sup>1</sup>The Bravo poisoning case, 1876.

understood, or to win the kind of love which only she could with all her heart respond to, tho' plenty of another kind might be offered. *Now* I should have no fear, and my greatest anxiety and most earnest prayer is that he may learn to love her more and not less, for by love, and that only, will she ever be led and influenced and all the good parts in her brought out. She must love and look up and feel she is loved. At least that is the desire of her nature.

She is not easy to understand, and is very apt to mislead people by her love of fun and the difficulty she has in expressing her real and secret feelings. She loves your son with all her heart and soul, and looks up to him with perfect trust; so much so that I cannot help, at times, a touch of fear. . . .

It is a very great blessing to be able not only to approve with the judgment, but to feel heart content. So strong is my interest and, I may say, love for him, that it has sometimes placed me in a curious and anxious position, for I found myself considering and doubting on his account, and anxious for his happiness, independently of Lily. It is indeed no common blessing to be connected with such a one as he is!

Her sincere admiration, and even "love," for Edward Stone prompted Mrs. Vidal's deception. The more she comprehended Lily's difficult temperament with its clear-cut shadows and vivid high-lights, the more she must needs have worried about the future, and there was not a nuance in her daughter's character lost to her sensitive observation.

They were married on August the 3rd, 1861, and for their honeymoon went on a driving tour in an open carriage. Though Edward had been looking worried and ill throughout their engagement, he was constitutionally as strong as Lily was delicate. He preferred driving tours to any other diversion in England, and Lily, always game, did not demur. To neither of them did it occur that it could be exhausting; yet so frail was she that she was worn out when they returned to Eton and she took up the responsibilities of the big house at the corner of Keate's Lane. She was now twenty years old. Her wings were clipped.

The first baby was born on October 10th, 1863, and christened Mary Vidal. Lily's mother was in charge, and wrote minute bulletins in her fine masculine hand, for Mrs. Stone in Dorchester. Lily was desperately ill, and could not nurse the child, who was one of the handsomest babies the doctor had seen. The kindly formula was in this case justified, for Mary was, if not exactly handsome, a child of fairy-like beauty almost from her first hours, and family tradition says that none of the rest could compare with her. Her eyes were "perfect stars." She grew up small and dark and Spanish, high-spirited and extremely wilful in character, with a gift for story-telling which could have made her a successful novelist. There are few memories of my childhood more delightful than walks with Mary on a seashore or through woods, hearing that thrilling tale of trees, *Phantastes*, or the splendours and miseries of Jean Valjean and little Cosette. She brought to them a glamour neither George Macdonald nor Victor Hugo could excel. But Mary did not become a novelist. She joined the community of St. Mary the Virgin at Wantage when she

was twenty-nine. Lucy Hester, Francis Joseph, Edward Wellington, Margaret Theresa, Ruth Boswell, William Johnson, Guy Ironside, followed Mary in fairly regular succession. Lucy, after a long career as a professional violinist, retired to a Catholic nunnery with her Strad, Frank and Ned followed their father, Frank at Radley, Ned at Eton, and Margaret and Ruth married, rather late, into the Church. Though this brief summary may suggest a certain monotony of high purpose in the Stone family, with one exception they started life with a fair number of minor imperfections. The exception was Lucy, who was born with an incapacity for evil happily blended with a sense of humour. Lily always spoke and wrote with a sort of reverence of her second daughter.

For the rest, Frank was a bit of a dark horse, a puzzle even to his mother; Ned had a bad temper and had been known to bite; Maggie was a rebellious spirit; she had a mop of dark gold hair and a passionate temperament. When she was good her mother became anxious about her. Sweet little Ruth's worst vice was an incurable love of home which made school an agony to her. Lucy shared this failing, but was strong enough to endure without complaint long sojourns in Paris and Germany in pursuit of her art. Willie began as a puny boy with reddish hair, pale and nervous, but gifted intellectually far beyond the rest. Later, when Captain of the Oppidans at Eton, his body, suddenly released, sprang to match the stature of his mind. Cambridge saw him a tall, slim athlete, who rowed Seven in the King's Eight. But his heart was strained, as we were all to know some years later. . . . Guy was the first "sport" (in the horticultural sense) on the family branch, being completely averse from scholar-



ship, and hardily indifferent to the practice of religion, which was the foundation of the family life. He was also the only member of the family who was not musical to some degree. A feature of Lily's dinner-parties was the sudden appearance at dessert of a flock of children in nightgowns who sang nursery rhymes in sweet true little voices they inherited from her. The first dinner-party, before there were any children, had been a horrible failure.

"I can't think why Edward enjoys entertaining so much," she writes. "We are both no good at it." She does not mention the guests, but it was quite possible they were not easy to entertain. Something had to be done to enliven the monotony of Eton dinner-parties. One could not always have the brilliant Mrs. Cornish to lighten the deadly lump. Lily describes a party at the Hawtreys. "A regular musical swarry, and a deal of squealing there was. Nothing really worth hearing except Barnby's delicious voice. Mr. Cornish sang and played to be sure—what more can one desire? Edward sang in some part-songs which were not altogether bad."

Joseph Barnby was Precentor at Eton, and his daughter Muriel was about my age. We played together, but without much enthusiasm. Muriel was, quite rightly, full of feminine vanities which I could not understand. She was pretty and gaily dressed as a little girl, while I was pale and delicate and always clothed in the dullest of garments. We parted at the age of six and never met again till a few years ago at a lunch-party my neighbour (it was one of those hen lunch-parties which women appear to enjoy so much) announced that she was born at Eton, so I admitted

that I was too, and it was Muriel Barnby, plump and handsome, full of good spirits, become through her own energy and personality a popular figure in London life.

Mr. Cornish was later Vice-Provost of Eton, and husband to the brilliant woman who has so far eluded successful portraiture, though many attempts have been made.<sup>1</sup> Her genius was too elusive, her wit too wreathed about with her own essential atmosphere, to survive the printed page. Percy Lubbock in *Shades of Eton* gives an admirable sketch of the intellectual, aloof from the humdrum of Eton life, conversing on equal terms with an unusual boy who, in spite of a natural shyness, found himself unabashed in her presence.

The Cornishes were our intimate friends at Eton and after. I only remember the nursery of the house they lived in before Mr. Cornish became Vice-Provost. We always entered it through Judy's Passage because the garden gate which Edward came through that evening when he thought of the name of Christopher was also in Judy's Passage, and only a few paces away. I would be put through the Cornishes' garden door and find my way through the shrubbery, over the lawn, up the stairs, to that big nursery which strangely enough I remember so much better than my own. There the younger Cornish girls would be found and an enormous rocking-horse, the largest I ever saw, with a round hole where its tail should have been. They were all fair and rather pale, but exceedingly animated and easy to play with. I was at ease with them as I was with few people. All my shyness fled in their company. I must have been even amusing,

<sup>1</sup>Since I wrote this, I have re-read *A Nineteenth Century Girlhood*, and Mary MacCarthy's perfect portrait of her mother.

for an elder sister coming into the nursery one day heard one of them cry ecstatically:

"Oh, Faith, you are so *delishos*!"

I was never "delishos" when I was taken to tea with my godfather. I would sit dumb at his exquisite tea-table, apparently in a state of petrification, while he shyly tried to put me at ease, his beautiful face glowing with kindness. I must have seemed utterly unresponsive, a tough problem for him altogether. Yet when it was over I would run from Baldwin's Shore, where he lived, impatient to tell Lily of the wonderful afternoon I had spent with him who was the most romantic of men—H. E. Luxmoore! Lily would listen eagerly, and prompt me for more.

"I should never have had the courage to go forward if Mr. Luxmoore had not heartened me on," Lily had written a few years before I was born. Life at Eton had not been easy for her. Not only did she find the social round excessively tedious, and her own health a burden almost intolerable, but there were complications which eventually drove her into a groove from which she could not be persuaded to emerge. Edward's popularity was the main cause of the trouble. His merits as man and scholar were outstanding enough to convince Dr. Hornby, who was headmaster at this critical time, that at all costs he must not be allowed to stray. Yet it was well known that he was constantly preparing for flight. Not that he did not love Eton, but he felt as Lily did the restriction of those "four walls of Eton" which she found so like a prison. No doubt Lily's discontent reacted on him. At any rate, in the course of twenty-five years he inspected Cheam, Rossall, Highgate, Tiverton, Perse and Tonbridge schools. But they were not for him.

To induce Edward to stay Dr. Hornby promoted him above the heads of some of his seniors, and this aroused a storm of jealousy, which had its repercussions in the correspondence columns of *The Times* and *Spectator*, and led to at least one resignation. The atmosphere at Eton was heavily charged with bitterness. Lily wrote to her mother-in-law when Edward had failed to get Highgate:

It is a great blow, for I made sure that Edward would be chosen. However, these things are to be taken as they come, and I shall soon look up again, no doubt. The misery of being here is the ill-will and jealousy shown about Edward in consequence of this second division business. He does not mind it because of course he is conscious of being perfectly innocent of the scheming of which he is accused. But I can't bear it all, and hate to show my face anywhere. . . . (I have never told you that No. 8 is on the road!) . . .

That Edward should scheme for his own advancement was indeed a fantastic notion, and the best of Eton recognised this. He lost no good friends by "this Second Division business," and it must have been soon after that unhappy letter of Lily's that the Luxmoores' friendship lifted her from the despair into which she had fallen. The house on Baldwin's Shore became her refuge. She would "run in" at all hours, to that house whose atmosphere was peace and beauty. A calm detachment from the horrid noises of the world was here: chitter-chat did not penetrate those walls. Only Mrs. Luxmoore, serene and secluded, did the honours for her bachelor son, the incomparable

H. E. L., and it was to her that Lily went for comfort and found it always. She found, too, exquisite happiness at Baldwin's Shore which changed the whole tenor of her life at Eton. H. E. L.'s loyalty to Edward, his remoteness from the petty preoccupations of the average man, and a certain nobility of aspect and attitude won Lily's ardent soul. His kindness, too, to her; his heartening advice when she was perplexed! He was for her the "very parfit gentil knight," and theirs was one of those rare and lovely friendships that no evil can touch.

There is a picture by H. E. L. opposite me as I write now. On the frame is inscribed:

*Ego Dilecto meo et Dilectus meus Mihi, qui pascitur inter lilia.* My beloved is mine and I am his, who feedeth among the lilies.

Lily writes of this picture:

It is a figure in white, standing in a bed of lilies, holding one of them in his hand, but looking far away. There are blue iris in front, and a delicious slate-coloured dove hovering close to the ground. There is a grace about it which touches me more than any picture I know, and yet I believe artistically it is a failure, and he professes to be ashamed of it. It is to be mine some day, but I am afraid I shall die first, and he may just as well let me have it now, for it only stands in a corner with its face to the wall.

She had her way. The picture soon became hers, and I don't remember when it had not pride of place in her room. It came to me when she died, but after I had had it for some time I found written faintly at the back of it:

"To go back to H. E. L. at my death."

He replied to my letter from Capri on April 10, 1923:

About the picture. You will do me a great kindness if you will keep it, and you do me a still greater by saying that you like it; it's wonderful that you have kept it and even carried it about with you across the sea. I do recollect your mother caring for it, but if I am not mistaken it is sadly sentimental and very badly painted. I never got any proper use of oils.

The Luxmoore friendship was at its height when I was born, and it is not surprising that he should have become my godfather. No two people could have been more shy of each other than we were, always, but he was an admirable godparent as far as gifts went. Mr. Luxmoore's present at Christmas was as confidently awaited as the Granny money which came from Dorset for all of us. Of the books he gave me Walter Crane's *Flora's Feast* was the favourite, and the best gift of all was a beautiful Byzantine necklace set with rich-hued carbuncles, which of course I lost at school. Then came my confirmation and a handsome Bible which was the grand finale. No more presents, his obligations being fulfilled, except a set of Shakespeare some years later, when I was going to America in a theatrical company, to counteract the influence of that dreadful country and the theatrical company. I went to Sotheran's as he suggested and ordered myself a complete set of the Temple Shakespeare, which was probably more than he bargained for. Only *Hamlet* and *The Sonnets* went to America.

By the time Christopher was born Edward had had enough of Eton. In the course of his career he had been developing educational theories which he was eager to put to the test, but for which Eton offered no scope. With all his solid virtues he was a visionary, who dreamed of an ideal school where boys could be taken young and taught to love the classics as he did. He would have no flogging, no cup-hunting and no cramming. There should be liberty and generous trust in a boy's honour. Lily shared this dream with him, but its realisation seemed very remote. Though Edward was overworked, he was not making enough money to save him continual anxiety with his family of ten and an invalid wife. Lily was terribly ill after Christopher's birth, and spent some months at Brighton to recuperate, surrounded by children who wore her out. Among them myself, frightened to death of the sea. So frightened that I was sent back to Eton after a few days of it. They were having spectacular waves over the Parade which impressed my baby mind so deeply that I have never conquered a fear of the sea, though I am nearly always closely surrounded by it.

Edward himself, meanwhile, was surrounded by water, as the floods were out at Eton, and the Briary garden completely submerged. Ironsides, the white horse, had to be stabled in Windsor and every one went about in boats. Edward was bothered. By the retirement of a senior master to a living, he became Senior Assistant, and there was a suggestion that he should take on the house made vacant by this retirement. A big house, and a lot of responsibility. Was it worth the increase in cash?

He was now fifty-one, and feeling a little bit tired of Eton routine. Lily was hardly fit to undertake such

a task. She came home for Christmas, 1882, and wrote to Granny Stone:

Faith is the very sweetest thing, but looks delicate and is very pathetic at times. I think she felt my absence at Brighton acutely, for she clings to me in a terrified way whenever I go out of the room. The other day she was playing as I thought quite happily and I was hearing Guy read, when she said in a dear little reproachful voice, "Muvver take care baby—muvver take care baby," and she is always getting on my lap and making much of me.

Obviously the terror inspired by the sea at Brighton still haunted me.

Lily's health collapsed again in 1883. She was sent to London for treatment, and the doctor told Edward it would be months before she could be cured. This was all dreadfully depressing for both of them, and Edward was in despair because of the obscurity of the future. Lily would never be well at Eton, there was a great deal of tittle-tattle, and he was himself tired. He was not inclined for the drastic changes that threatened, with a new Head, for Dr. Hornby was retiring to become Provost. It is all very well to be at Eton for four happy youthful years, and to revisit it ecstatically for the Winchester match or the Fourth. He had had twenty-five years of it, and though no doubt he would visit it again with delight if he ever escaped, he longed for that escape.

And then a press cutting came from a friend, and changed the whole course of their lives. It advertised a property for sale: Stonehouse, on the North Fore-



land, the holiday residence of Archbishop Tait. The name had attracted the sender. "Surely this place is meant for you?"

Edward hurried down to Broadstairs and inspected. He drove along dusty chalk roads flanked by cornfields in a treeless land. Then it suddenly seemed that all the trees must have been swept up and imprisoned within a compelling flint wall. Such an oasis of greenery in the white and yellow landscape claimed his attention. As the hired carriage climbed the hill he gazed at the flint wall facing him, with a little garden gate closely set, and trees pushing over the top all along: soon the flint wall was on his left, and to his right was a long green field surrounded by more trees, a shrubbery, in fact, which went right down to the sea and was obviously part of the same property. This, he knew, must be Stonehouse, and when the fly turned in at the gates on the left, and he saw the little Gothic lodge and beyond it the cool drive shaded by ilex and other evergreen trees, curving left to an open sweep in front of a great white house, which faced the most entrancing lawn he had ever seen, he knew that his dreams were coming true.

Life was to begin again for him and Lily, and the children would have a perfect home! This house should be his, and his theories should be tried and proved, he prayed. He had become stale at Eton; now faith in himself revived as his dreamy blue eyes gazed across that lawn to the sea beyond. And Lily would get well; ah, yes! Lily must get well here.

EDWARD



LILY



## CHAPTER TWO

### STONEHOUSE

LILY was still in the nursing home in London when Edward came to her with the news of Stonehouse. She was immensely excited.

"The favourite home of Archbishop Tait! Then it must be substantial and comfortable. Tell me more."

"It's very substantial indeed, my dear. A more solid house I have never seen. It is built of stone<sup>1</sup> and painted a creamy white. There are two wings, and the centre part, which has a good bulge on each side, also has a covered balcony running the whole length of the drawing-room floor, which spreads into a sort of room over the large porch. I thought of you, my dear, lying peacefully on that balcony."

"Lying peacefully! That's just what I must not be doing. I must get well, Edward, now that there is the possibility of this new life, more than ever *I must get well*. There will be so much to do!"

"Of course you will get well. The school will depend upon you and your influence. The balcony will be for rest after the day's work. Then there's the garden——"

He paused. How describe the charm of that green lawn and the great walled garden behind the house?

"We shall look out over a sloping lawn; it has a dip half-way down, but above I believe it will be flat enough for tennis. The whole lawn is thickly

<sup>1</sup>He was wrong here. It was red brick, which at some period had been cemented over to a semblance of stone.

bordered with lauristinus. I have never seen it grow so richly, and so deep, in some places about twenty feet to the flint wall, so that there is a regular boschage underneath. The effect from the house is almost of upholstery, so closely does it grow. I should like to see it in full bloom. It is clipped, of course, and so cunningly that it leaves a space for the view of the sea, and curves gently up again on each side as much as to say, 'Here's a glimpse of the sea, but here also is the wind.' A better wall against gales could hardly have been devised."

"What else?"

"Two magnificent ilexes on the right of the lawn, and just below the dip an arbutus unedo which the children will call the strawberry tree, one of the most lovely trees I have ever seen, perfect in shape. On the upper lawn is a superb weeping ash. A shrubbery skirts the lawn behind the ilex trees, and leads to the garden gate, and all round the estate runs another path deeply wooded which I shall call 'Round the World.' In the middle of 'Round the World' is the orchard, with a great walnut tree and plenty of apples and cherries. Oh, and in the middle of *that* is an oasis of small slender trees, mostly birches, I think. The boys' gardens will run along one side of the orchard."

"You have even settled that!"

"Yes. Then I haven't told you about the walled garden which is somewhere behind the house, more than an acre of it, splendidly laid out with hedges here and there for shelter, a good-sized greenhouse with a vine, and the south walls covered with peaches, nectarines and a special little plum which the gardener Eves, who lives in the lodge, tells me is as sweet as a grape and called the Archbishop's plum. He also tells

me that there is a wonderful and rare black iris<sup>1</sup> which the Archbishop brought from somewhere, he is not quite clear where. Quite a pleasant fellow, Eves. I think I shall keep him on."

Lily laughed at Edward's confidence.

"You haven't told me yet the price of this estate."

"Well, it's £12,000, at least that is what they are asking."

"Oho!"

"You see, it's a big property, two large fields as well as the grounds. And everything in apple-pie order. Splendid out-buildings well away from the house in old red brick, servants' quarters and ample space for a laundry, good stables and a carpenter's shop. Then there's plenty of room to build on behind the house when we want to enlarge."

"Not too big, Edward dear! Don't frighten me. But there will be work for us all. Mary can help with the housekeeping, and Maggie and Ruth will soon be old enough to be useful."

"Beyond the upper field, which is enormous, and so exposed that I shall plant trees all round it at once, there is an imposing building of a Gothic tendency. This will interest you, my dear, for it is St. Peter's orphanage founded by Archbishop Tait for the children of the victims of Asiatic cholera which broke out in 1866.<sup>2</sup> The little girls wear Red Riding Hood cloaks and hoods, and must look very picturesque when they go walking.

"And did I tell you about the summer-house? You turn off a narrow path from 'Round the World,' and

<sup>1</sup>Iris Susiana.

<sup>2</sup>This orphanage was remembered in the will of Lady Davidson, wife of the late Archbishop of Canterbury. She was Miss Edith Tait.

suddenly you are in a long broad walk at the end of which is a Georgian summer-house, as solid as the house itself. Up three steps on to a veranda, and then a good big room with two windows and a fireplace. The girls can have a stove and amuse themselves with cooking."

They were silent a minute, thinking of the future.

"Round the World," said Edward pensively, "ivy grows along the ground, but it is blue with periwinkles."

"I must get well, Edward, I must get well! We must have this new life. Somehow we shall manage the price."

"Do not fear, sweet wife," said he, kissing her. "We shall have Stonehouse."

Miss Tait was amenable, and agreed to a mortgage on £9000 of the price, and Granny Stone, whose purse always flew open on such occasions, made the rest possible. Edward's resignation and his new project caused a stir at Eton. There was some apprehension, but a general impulse to wish the scheme well, and many promises of recommendation from his colleagues. Eton gave him a life pension of £400, and there were so many parting presents that Lily said it was like being married again, only much better.

Edward, Lily and Maggie picnicked at Stonehouse in April, 1884.

Imagine us, in the drawing-room with the curtains drawn, the fire blazing, the candles lighted. We have just finished tea, which we got ourselves, after dispatching the charwoman. It is rather lonely in this big house. . . . Who should turn up here yesterday but John Hawtrey and his

wife. . . . He seized an early opportunity of spying out the land and, I think, was immensely struck by the capabilities of the place. We are still more charmed with Stonehouse, the more we see of it; the only thing it wants in my eyes is colour; I shall hope to see a little more next Spring.

John Hawtrey, father of Charles, was as near as Westgate and a friendly neighbour.

The first boy to arrive at Stonehouse was John Shuckburgh, son of Edward's colleague at Eton, Evelyn Shuckburgh. He came in September, 1884. He was closely followed by Ivor Guest, now Lord Wimborne, and his brother Freddie, and "Obbie" Beauclerk, now Duke of St. Albans. Obbie's sisters, Moyra, Kitty and Alix, were my most thrilling friends. We collected shells, and the result of our exchanges was for me a chest full of exotic bivalves rare in colour and texture. Once when I was a girl at school in London and sat in the stalls at the Prince's Hall (now a restaurant) at one of Lucy's concerts, a rose dropped into my lap during the interval. I looked round, and then up, to the balcony, and there were those three lovely girls. The rose had been thrown with amazing accuracy by Moyra. They were with Helen Wolff, who had been Mary and Lucy's governess years ago, and was then on the way to becoming Mayfair's favourite teacher. Her classes in South Street have been the inspiration of at least two generations of girls.

There were seven boys for that first autumn term. One of them was Willie, Edward's third son, still puny and delicate, moved from a dame's school at Deal, where Guy remained.



Edward began to build immediately. The house grew another story within the next two years. On the right wing a dormitory called Gordon went up at once, later on the top of the house proper, two dormitories, Ascham and Colet, and on the left wing bathrooms and additions to our own quarters, called Poets' Corner. Edward and Lily occupied the second floor of this wing, and the dining-room was below that. Our nursery was behind Lily's bedroom, looking out over the walled garden across the space that was waiting to be built upon. We were looked after by sisters Mary, Maggie or Ruth, whoever happened to be at home, and a nursemaid. Both Lily and Edward were strong in the conviction that usefulness was the first thing to learn. Edward, greatly influenced by Carlyle (though he could not bear *Frederick the Great*), wrote at this time:

Carlyle has not preached in vain; the day of shams and outer integuments is on the wane. The people, the real workers will have their day, and woe to those who are mere cumberers of the ground.

Truly, no one concerned in this lighthearted adventure could be called a cumberer. Edward, though conscious of his shortcomings as an organiser, went forward with energy towards the goal he had set himself, a flourishing school of thirty to thirty-five boys. He did not want more. He knew at once that the gods were with him. The novelty of his ideas, the beauty of the place, the unworldly charm of Lily, and his own high repute won the day.

"We are flooded with perpetual parents," writes Lily.

The word had gone round! Edward could risk an extra £2000 or so on improvements without misgiving.

The new dormitory was quickly followed by the great schoolroom, which was built in that space at the back of the house. This was a truly original conception. Under its roof would be gathered the whole school during work hours. The different forms would be shielded from each other by curtains. Thus Edward would have complete control of affairs from his elevation on the stage. Not only work was under consideration when he planned this room. Concerts and theatricals played a large part in his schemes, and the splendid stage and proscenium gave the room a permanently festive air. Edward had a passion for theatricals, which had never been properly satisfied at Eton. True, he had been greatly in demand for the Shakespeare readings at the Cornishes, and his delight in his Dickens readings was as great as his audience's. But he wanted to produce plays, and I think one of the essential qualities of the tutors he so carefully chose for Stonehouse was a taste in this direction. At any rate he was always ably supported in stage management by his staff, and there came a happy day when a German governess arrived on the scene to teach music. Christine Keiper—that was her name, a fair serious young woman with delicate hands and dignified ways. She had a gift for stage costume which was almost genius.

Edward was absorbed in his new work; the bracing air of the North Foreland filled him with energy, and he had but one preoccupation. That was Lily's health. She had been "cured" before they left Eton, and took up life very strenuously, determined to be fit for the new venture. The business of finding and managing

a large staff of female servants was enough to make the stoutest heart quail. Added to all this was the duty of receiving and charming parents whenever they came, and interesting herself in the boys, which was the least difficult part of her task. Bravely she fought the pain and exhaustion. "Lily does too much! She keeps up by force of will," was Edward's cry. "Complete rest is what she needs!" But how could Lily rest, with everything to do to set the new machine moving? She must engage a housekeeper to save her anxiety. But the housekeeper came and only added to her anxiety, and was replaced by another who was ten times worse. It was not only the school. There were her own ten children to worry about. Mary, to be sure, was safe at home, aged twenty-two, but tutors were inclined to fall in love with her. Lucy, dear little soul, was in London living with Miss Octavia Hill, and accepting engagements to play her violin at parties. Lily stipulated that if she did this she should always be chaperoned by Frank, who was at that time staying with Octavia Hill and studying architecture with Mr. Hoole, who built the schoolroom.

Ned was at Eton, and who could tell what trials the poor boy was going through! There had been a dreadful scandal in college since he was there, and several boys had been expelled. It simply didn't bear thinking about.

Maggie and Ruth! Maggie had so improved in the last year, in character and looks. No doubt she would be the beauty of the family. But how pretty Ruth was, with her demure little face and gentle ways! They were a lovely pair, and Lily wished she could keep them always at home. They would soon have to go to school again, and that was such an agony for Ruth.

Willie and Guy! Here was Willie at Stonehouse, and going to Eton next year. He was not going to try for a scholarship. Edward agreed that the strain would be too much for him. He would be an Oppidan and was down for Luxmoore's. Guy was having trouble with his eyes, and wrote from the dame's school at Deal that he was to have "spekles." He would soon be at home, and a Stonehouse boy.

Faith! Already the most difficult child of all. "Sweet little Faith" had developed into a problem. A lonely child, with only elder sisters, and Christopher, really too much of a baby to be a satisfactory companion. Willie and Guy inclined to tease, but never to bully her. "Why not send her to stay with Uncle William in Hampstead?" Lily had suggested when a few months at Stonehouse had proved that Faith was not in her element there. Peevish and sickly, poor child, and not profiting by the keen east wind of Broadstairs.

Uncle William—William Johnson Cory—brother of Lily's mother, was the brilliant eccentric, lover of boys, whose love was embodied in that classic treasure, *Ionica*, and who was one of the most inspiring teachers Eton had ever known. The world knows him best as the author of the Eton Boating Song.

W. T. J. Gun in *Studies in Hereditary Ability* works out the genealogies of forty families which represent the brains of the British nation, whether strategic or intellectual. The importance of the female line is rightly stressed in this fascinating book, and as an example, the Reynolds family is fully examined. Sir Joshua had a fortunate inheritance, his father's family being noted for scholarship, his mother Theophila being the grand-daughter of Thomas

Baker, vicar of Bishop's Nympton in Devon, who was a distinguished mathematician. Devon was responsible for both families, and Samuel Reynolds, Sir Joshua's father, a scholar of Corpus and Fellow of Balliol, was content to spend his life as Headmaster of Plympton School.

Sir Joshua had three sisters, and this is where the female line comes in. His favourite was Mary, who became Mrs. Palmer, and was a painter and writer of some ability. Her daughters, Lady Thomond and Mrs. Gwatkin, were as children frequently his models. Mrs. Gwatkin posed for *The Strawberry Girl*: Lady Thomond inherited his large fortune. There was nothing, apparently, for either Frances or Elizabeth, his other sisters, or their children.

But it was Elizabeth who passed on the Reynolds gifts.

She married William Johnson, also a Devon man, rather a bad lot. They lived at Torrington, and Sir Joshua sometimes brought his friend Dr. Samuel Johnson to visit them. The doctor once declared that no one ever gave him enough home-made scones; Elizabeth was delighted to watch the great man eat thirteen with relish, and no doubt a great scattering of crumbs. Her grandson married his cousin, Mary Furse, a Devon heiress, and had a small but remarkable family. My grandmother Mary Theresa was the eldest. The eldest son, Charles Wellington, changed his surname to Furse when he inherited the estate of Halsdon in Devon. He was Principal of Cuddesdon, and then Archdeacon of Westminster. He was also considered one of the best judges of a horse in England. There were always pure-bred Arabs in the stables at Halsdon. This taste he shared with his nephew, Lily's brother,

Furse Vidal, also in the Church, and my favourite uncle. He ran an Arab stud-farm at his rectory in Suffolk, and amused himself with experimental breeding among the native cart-horses, but I never heard if the Arab strain was successful. Once I was thrilled to find notepaper on his study desk headed, not Creeting Rectory, but Arab Stud Farm, Creeting, Needham Market. Great-uncle Wellington married Jane Monsell (aunt of the present Lord Monsell) and produced a large family which for vitality and ability would be hard to beat. The most famous of them all died at thirty-five, Charles Wellington Furse, the painter of men and beasts. The rest are still shining in their various spheres. The girls, with one exception, married parsons. "Marry a Furse and become a bishop" might have been a watchword in the Church.

The second son of William Johnson and Mary Furse was the author of *Ionica*, who changed his name to Cory after his retirement from Eton, and married at sixty a girl out of the schoolroom. He sought distraction in holding classes for young ladies, but did not, I imagine, find much, though his teaching was vastly appreciated. To his home in Hampstead I was sent, and at first was happy playing with the only son of the marriage, and going to the kindergarten. Uncle William wrote that my gift for story-telling—rather an ambiguous phrase—impressed him, and I seemed to be a success all round. Then Edward wrote:

Dear little Faith is not quite happy at her great-uncle's. They seem to pet her too much with the best intentions, and so intensify her self-will. She is a very quiet determined child, and apt to be exceedingly unreasonable if she is

not allowed to have her way. Still we shall go through with the experiment as it would not do to have her home; she would think she had got her way. We are discussing her future with some anxiety. I think company would be good for her. She is alone in the family, and not so easily managed here.

I got my way fairly soon and was back for the first Christmas at Stonehouse. Pallid and irritable, I was only a trial at the family feasts, and did not fit in anywhere. Every one else went in pairs, two girls, two boys right down the family, and here were Christopher and I at the fag end, not belonging to any one. But Booboo in fact was every one's idol; I had grown out of the "sweet little" stage, and was forlornly detached, consoling myself by upsetting as far as possible my elder sisters' devices. If Maggie and Ruth planned a morning of needlework, for they were clever with their clothes, and usually dressed alike, I would make myself such a nuisance that they would lock me out, and then I would drum maddeningly on the door till Maggie in a rage flung it open and pushed me downstairs to be dealt with by brothers.

I would spend hours in the dark world under the lauristinus bushes round the lawn. Here I could walk for what seemed miles among thin branches covered with pale-green dust, beneath a dense roof where birds nested. Under my feet was a tortoise-shell carpet of shining dead leaves. Through this still world I would wander silently, watching for the flight of a bird, sensing the little people, but never seeing them as I did in Dorset, carrying the ash stick I always cut for myself with the knife Edward brought me from

Broadstairs. Or in a more companionable mood I would accompany Edward to his garden on the edge of the cliff, which was reached through the long shrubbery across the road. Here he had a wooden garden house, and wrestled with the chalky ground in his oldest flannels, sowing gay flowers that came up wreathed in the pink convolvulus or the tiny yellow creeping snapdragon which were the pretty pests of the soil. Edward could not be very severe with them.

"The naughty little dears. They *won't* realise that this is a garden now."

Will and Guy did not neglect me, though they naturally preferred Margaret and Ruth, who were nearer their age. Will was my adoration, and when he teased me it was a delicious agony. Guy, whose dark Latin type I greatly admired, ragged about with me, and once said "damn," which shocked me fearfully. Our amusements were peculiar. One of them was to sit opposite each other at a table in the summer-house, and bang rhythms with our fists endlessly. There was a presage of jazz in some of our performances. These two brothers were tonic influences on my nebulous character.

Ruth was young enough to enjoy some of my elaborate games. She would play "school" with real enthusiasm. For this a large number of books and plenty of different sized marbles were required. The books were laid flat on the floor, to form the ground plan of a schoolhouse. The small marbles were the school children, different colours and sizes indicating the classes. Large marbles were the teachers. What was interesting about this game was that they nearly all achieved personality. There was a large misshapen mauve marble who bullied her pupils abomin-



ably, and a very small dark-blue one who was always put in the corner. The classes had to be marshalled from room to room through endless passages, and all assembled for prayers in the big room which was the nucleus of the building. It was the nearest I ever got to playing soldiers.

Christopher and I played and fought together and were very lavish with presents to each other. "Faith bought me a whip and some reins it was all together 1s. 5d." "Dear Mother, I want to know if you will let me have £1 or 2 out of the bank because I *do* want to buy Faith a watch."

A dead seagull found on the lawn caused the worst fight we ever had. Why either of us wanted it I cannot imagine, but we did both want it so passionately that Christopher's nasty little teeth made a bloody wound in my arm. He got the seagull, but it was immediately confiscated.

I now determined to go to school. There was a talk of sending me to the Convent at East Grinstead where Maggie and Ruth had been, but, says Edward:

Faith wants very much to go to school; she is the funniest child, I don't know what we shall do with her; perhaps send her to East Grinstead. I am only afraid she will take too comic a view of the proceedings.

By proceedings, I suppose he meant the ritual in church, and he was wise to put aside this notion. Finally I went to a school in Surbiton where I was reasonably well-behaved and quite happy until Ruth, now aged fourteen, was sent to keep me company. She came in the middle of the winter term, which was a

pecially severe one, and the heating arrangements were inadequate, at least Ruth found them so, coming straight from the luxurious warmth of Stonehouse. This made her homesickness more than ever unbearable. I can see her now, leaning against the mantelpiece, hiding her face on her arm, while great tears fell unchecked, plop, plop, into the fender. I was moved by the tragic posture of that slim little figure to burst into tears myself, I honestly believe from sheer sympathy. But Ruth's unhappiness must have preyed on my mind, for soon afterwards Edward writes:

"Faith's last letter contained a picture of a little girl with tears streaming from her eyes." It was a gentle hint, which was taken, for we were removed at the end of that term, and both remained at Stonehouse for a time.

It seemed that I should never get used to the bracing air of Thanet. Edward describes me at this time as "a mere little wizened mite." And then I had inflammation of the lungs, which left a large patch, and I was very ill for some time. Lily took me to sleep in their room, and I was always creeping into their bed for comfort, and disturbing her nights. Yes, I was nothing but a worry.

But Christopher! "Booboo is very busy with his spade, his face rosy, his laugh cheery and bright. The sweetest little boy that ever was, though he has given Maggie's cheek an ugly scar with his nasty little nails." He had a wheel-barrow for his birthday and was wheeling some of his twenty-three presents about the garden, the blessed child, as happy and good as could be.

Lily need not worry about Christopher. The east

wind does not play havoc with his nerves, as it does with Faith's. He is a lovely Sir Joshua child (how right that he had been christened Reynolds!), such a contrast to Faith, with his bright colouring and curly gold hair.

No, Lily need not for the moment worry about Christopher, but the burden of this great household weighed her down. Servants came and went; and if they stayed they were mostly a handful. There was a ridiculous incident with the cook, who was a Roman Catholic. When the chimneys were being rebuilt, such a shower of soot resulted that everything in the rooms had to be covered. The cook, going into her bedroom, found her little oratory swathed in a dust-sheet, and flew in a rage to give notice, because she thought somebody was insulting her religion. She calmed down when the truth was explained to her and consented to stay. . . . Workmen everywhere, and all these young under-maids in dire peril. Nothing worse had transpired than the flinging of buns from passage windows to the workmen below, but anything might happen. Lily was as responsible for their morals as for their physical well-being. How to bear it all with an aching head and tortured back?

She fled to London to consult a doctor, and was told to avoid fatigue of any sort and above all, no worry. "Let everything go rather than worry."

As well tell her not to breathe as not to worry, when there was anything to worry about, and there always was.

I hope to hold on somehow till the school is fairly established, and I think I shall be able to do this—and then it doesn't matter.



FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE. *Childhood photographs*



She held on for more than a year with occasional breakdowns, and by that time her influence was so firmly established that if she should retire the routine would be undisturbed. Fraulein Keiper had not yet appeared on the scene, but three invaluable personalities had been permanently worked into the pattern of Stonehouse, Mary and Monty James,<sup>1</sup> and Miss Tyrrell. Mary and Monty were brother and sister, our second cousins. Mary, who undertook the housekeeping, was small and squat, with curly jet-black hair and a limp, which she did not improve by falling down in the basement soon after she arrived and fracturing her thigh in two places. She had a habit of singing such homely phrases as "Where is the cover of the biscuit box" or "Will you pass the butter, please!" which was exasperating but freely imitated behind her back. Lily disliked her intensely. Monty was a great giant of a man, a fine figure, but not good-looking, a master adored by the boys. These two supplied the practical side of things, in which Edward and Lily were both admittedly somewhat deficient, and Miss Tyrrell, the third figure in this trinity of excellence, came to do matron and teach the younger boys.

Miss Tyrrell, who soon became and remained "Tiddles," was a dark young woman of a gipsy type, who rode like an Amazon wearing the conventional top hat with flowing veil which was then the mode. She was psychic, and the leading spirit in the table turning *séances* which were a feature of Stonehouse evenings when the boys had been put to bed.

Edward tacitly disapproved of these sittings but was, as always, tolerant. One evening he left them as soon as they sat down to it, as was his practice, and a

<sup>1</sup>No relation of the late Provost of Eton mentioned later on.

message of goodwill to the school came through from the spirit of a boy at Eton, who had been in Woolley Dod's house. He said he had died at thirteen years. When Edward came down, Lily asked him if he remembered any one at Woolley Dod's house. He replied at once:

"Oh, yes, little Hornby. He died there. A dear little fellow."

Even Edward was slightly shaken by this message, for no one at the table had heard of little Hornby, and he was certainly not thinking of him. There were remarkable manifestations in the course of these sittings, which continued with various personnel throughout the Stonehouse days. The advent of one master, Mr. W—— in 1888, transformed the earnest search for truth into a riotous entertainment. He had but to lay his hands on the table and it would leap in the air, and canter round the room followed by breathless ladies. On one occasion even mounted the stairs after rushing through the door on to the landing outside the drawing-room. Mr. W—— had astonishing qualities for a schoolmaster, many of which appealed especially to Edward. Histrionic gifts, for example; he entertained the boys with songs at the piano in the manner of Corney Grain and was the life and soul of all the school entertainments. He walked softly, on the tips of his toes, carried a large Byronic head well, and was inclined already to stoutness. "He is conceited, but I don't mind that," said Edward. He had a colloquial and amusing way of teaching and of discussing subjects of the day which delighted and interested the boys. That was what Edward wanted. No dry-as-dust plodding for him.

W—— was also hypnotic, and had great powers of

mesmerism, which he used for our entertainment, as long as it was some one else being mesmerised. For he liked to make his subject a little bit ridiculous. One victim was given a bundle of dead leaves which she carried carefully down the basement stairs to the kitchen and gave to the cook, under the impression that they were new-laid eggs. He was great fun, Mr. W——, but did not stay long, for he went off to be a professional entertainer, and made a success of it.

Parents were not aware of the withering fire of criticism that was levelled at them when they visited Stonehouse, especially if they came in the holidays, as they often did. Many boys were rejected because Edward did not "take to" their parents, and there was a good deal of incredible behaviour by people who should have known better.

For instance, Sir Somebody Something and his lady came down one day to look at the school. Sir Somebody was harmless enough, being nearly blind and scarcely conscious of what was going on, but her Ladyship, a plain vulgar woman, behaved as though she were interviewing a housekeeper when she first talked to Lily, and beat all records with a remark she made at tea, in a loud voice across the drawing-room to her husband:

"What very good tea, is it not, William? It really compares quite favourably with our tea at Kensington Palace!"

Another curious piece of insolence came from a noble lord who sent a telegram at the beginning of the summer holidays announcing that Denis would "arrive by the Granville to-day." Denis had had a bad report, and was being sent back to school as a punishment quite regardless of the private plans of the Stone



family. This telegram was the only warning sent, though it was followed by a letter after Denis had arrived back at Stonehouse with his bag full of handkerchiefs soaked in tears. The natural impulse was to send him home again immediately, but he was a pleasant boy, and seemed prepared to enjoy his banishment, so he was allowed to stay.

The Granville, by the way, was, and still may be, the only train fit to travel in from London to Broadstairs. It left Victoria at 3.15 p.m.

Stonehouse was on the whole lucky in its parents. Most of them were appreciative of the idealistic tendency of Edward's schemes. Some were amazed at the liberty allowed to the boys. Edward believed in liberty, but not liberty to do just what you liked. "I hope we are not too lax, but I am sure happiness is essential to the well-being of young folk, and I would sacrifice much to it." But he was not sentimental. "I have one poor little solitary bird of a boy whom I see from my window wandering aimlessly about. I hope he will get on soon, but he has been dreadfully coddled, and no doubt finds the change a great one. But the discipline is good for him, and anyhow it is far less severe here than at some schools where he would have been actively bullied; here he is simply let alone. I am more anxious about L——'s boy who carries self-possession to the point of bumptiousness and is therefore far more likely to be unpopular."

"Mrs. MacCarthy brought down her brat," wrote Edward in 1885. "Brat" was in this case certainly a term of affection, for the brat, Desmond MacCarthy, was a favourite pupil, while his mother was decidedly the parent *sans pareil*. She came down first when I was ill, bringing with her toys from Germany, and sitting

by my bed chattering in broken English, and laughing the most infectious laugh I have ever known. Not a pretty woman by common standards, but she had something that enchanted a shy reserved child. Years later when I was often seeing Desmond and his mother, every visit was to me an ecstasy of mirth, so spontaneous was their laughter, and so rich their sense of the ridiculous.

Desmond MacCarthy and John Shuckburgh were much younger than the rest. Both came at eight years old, and both were pupils after Edward's own heart. Whatever Stonehouse may have done for youth, and I cannot think that there lived a boy so dull as not to have benefited in some way by its atmosphere, Edward's classical ideal was not fulfilled. Philosophically he soon accepted the indisputable fact that the average male mind, however young it was taken, was incapable of following him up the slopes of Parnassus. Indeed, so heartily was he convinced of this truth, that when, years later, the question of compulsory Greek shook the foundations of the scholastic world, he, its most passionate lover, voted against it. Experience had proved to him that Greek, if not loved, was waste of time.

He wrote:

John (Shuckburgh) is developing rapidly, and sucks in Greek at all his pores. There is no pressure, it is pure absorption. Gerald is as keen as possible.

Gerald was the third son of the Cornishes, an imaginative energetic boy, to whom homesickness meant taking action by running away from school. This he did twice, returning each time quite con-

tentedly.<sup>1</sup> It was perfectly easy to run away from Stonehouse, there were so many exits. Gerald's two escapades occurred at the beginning of term when homesickness was harshly upon him. He got no farther than Broadstairs station either time.

There was something dramatic even in the eating of meals at Stonehouse. Edward sat at the head of an immense long table, and at first carved for every one. Later on, small tables grew round the walls, and two ushers were entrusted with joints. Carving was one of Edward's most graceful accomplishments. His was the sweet clean cut, as deft as a swordsman's, and he was fully conscious that his prowess was worth watching. A splash here and there was inevitable and amusing.

At breakfast there was no carving to do, but a huge pile of letters lay tensely by his side. Each boy had an eye cocked on this significant heap, but he knew that until he had finished his eggs and bacon or sausages, it would not be stirred. Then the fun began. A shower of letters to all corners of the room! There were groans and giggles of excitement as Edward shot his missiles, landing each with a well-aimed flop somewhere in the environs of the addressee. This blithe start to the day's work showed that there was nothing humdrum about the routine of Stonehouse.

Lily's ill-health reached a climax at the end of 1885. She feared for her own reason, so frequent were the attacks of nervous irritability, and so monstrous was the smallest household care apt to become in her anxious mind. She left Stonehouse at the beginning of 1886, and now began that strange, pathetic, lonely Odyssey in search of health which was to last for years.

<sup>1</sup>He was killed in the Great War.

It began with faith-healing, which did not heal, in London. Then she was banished by a nerve specialist to the Isle of Arran. At Kilmorie, in the Isle of Arran, she was to live, alone with a nurse, as remote as could be imagined from the cares and worries of home. She was taken in an ambulance by train to Glasgow, and from there the rooms at Arran were negotiated. Here Edward visited her after two months. Past the Kyles of Bute he sailed to spend the 3rd of August with her; their Silver Wedding day. He found her no better. The least thing excited her and brought on blinding headaches. Her loneliness was dreadfully depressing, and it was impossible to drive from her mind the anxieties which no news only made keener.

He talked cheerfully of Stonehouse and told her all the news that he thought would amuse and interest without worrying her. The new schoolroom, its progress and splendid usefulness.

"It has turned out exactly as I had hoped. After school the decks are cleared and there is hardly a game they cannot play. Supposing it is wet they can even do a mild kick-about, and I have installed a miniature giant's stride which is very popular. They were all mad on stilts last half. The only puzzle at present is where they can hang their greatcoats. At present they are hung on pegs just inside the west door, but I don't like the look of that. I must think of something better for the winter."

Even Edward, with his intimate knowledge of Lily's temperament, was not wary enough with his news. For those greatcoats were too much for her. Where were they to go? Where *could* they go? All those greatcoats! To be out of the dust—to be invisible—yet to be aired when they were wet, not shut in a

close cupboard. All night she racked her brain with this puzzle, while Edward slept tranquilly, wholly unconscious of the grenade he had so innocently flung at her poor head. Greatcoats! Greatcoats! She was in a high fever by morning, and Edward was in despair at his thoughtlessness. He did not know "what to be at."

Though the Miss Mackenzies at Kilmoreie did all that was possible for her comfort her lodging was extremely primitive. She had never been outside the little garden during the two months she had been there, and was quite unable to walk. Edward ordered her a bath-chair from Glasgow, but "it is a question how she will bear the jolting."

He took her in it to the little burn that ran near the house, where honeysuckle, thyme and heather bordered the "umber pools" of which he writes in a poem dedicated to their wedding day. She enjoyed that afternoon but collapsed at the end of it. She had to keep quite still the next day, for Edward was moving her at her own wish from Arran to the Isle of Man!

He left her at Greenock with the nurse, while he went over to Man to find suitable lodgings for her.

Douglas is a very lively place; all the people are bent on pleasure, they come from Lancashire and Yorkshire chiefly, but the infusion of Scotch people is becoming stronger every year. I put up at the Peveril Hotel and was very comfortable. My object was to find lodgings. This I found was impossible in Douglas. The whole of the Esplanade is one long line of boarding houses. You see in each window which stands always wide open a long table spread with napkins in fans in the wine

glasses, or with guests eating and drinking according to the time of day. If a meal is not going on but is just about over, the people sit about in the doorway in chairs and on benches, or the steps, and chat and smoke. The ladies rarely have work in their hands. They have come for their holiday and they like it entire. . . . They are rather a noisy lot, especially as darkness gathers. There was no room in all this row of houses, and if there had been it was impossible for Lily. Each had the name Windsor House, Mona House, etc., with the name of the proprietrix, for they seemed all to be kept by women.

I had also to make arrangements for Lily's coming by the night boat Friday, and to see the captain and stewardess and to secure her a private cabin. This took up most of Thursday and I had no time to see the various exhibitions and gardens that were on view. Friday I started for Ramsey to see what I could find there, by a primitive railway, with no platforms and shabby carriages. Having secured lodgings I set off back to Douglas, the transit in each case occupying about an hour and a half, though the distance is not above twenty miles. I started again for Ramsey by steamer. The arrival of steamers is always announced by a gun. I had time to lay in provisions before the shops closed and went to bed with trembling for I had to be up at 4.30 to meet Lily. It was a still, close night, and Lily had a good passage. I was up without being called partly because I was fearful of oversleeping myself and partly because of fleas, of which I caught four with great sleight of hand.

It was a dull drizzly morning, the pier, which is about half a mile long, deserted. However, I had engaged porters overnight and when the boat came in late soon after five, I got Lily on a truck, reclining on cushions and rugs, and brought her up here in triumph. She wouldn't have liked it if there had been any one about, but of course we had the morning to ourselves.

The first lodgings would not do, so Edward searched again, and found a quiet house at Lezayre Mount, "at the end of all things, with no carriage passing." He read Walter Scott aloud to Lily, and *Frankenstein* in the new cheap series by Routledge. Cassell's and Ward and Hunt were bringing out cheap editions of the English Classics too, but "Routledge's," he says, "are the best print and cost 3d." He had to leave her for the autumn term early in September, and she was alone again, with her nurse Miss Butterworth, who was massaging her, and who by a rule of the institution from which she came would have to be replaced by another in a short time. Lily had come to like Miss Butterworth and dreaded a possible change for the worse. Edward found that by paying double fees Miss Butterworth could be kept on. This he gladly arranged.

"My only anxiety is not to leave any human means of helping her through her troubles and weariness untried."

If psycho-analysis had been in vogue then, or if the philosophy of Mrs. Eddy (or rather of Dr. Quimby) had penetrated to England in 1886, would Lily have benefited? Her malady was nervous purely. There was no organic trouble, but a complete disorganisation of all functions through nervous prostration.

With her history of suffering, it was inevitable that the climacteric should be a severe ordeal, and its coincidence with such a mental and physical upheaval as the move to Stonehouse and all that it meant to her, was enough to unbalance a sounder nervous system than hers. She had made a heroic effort to conquer ill-health—"I must be well! I must be well!"—but the strain was too much for a body and mind that had never had time to rest. Her brave spirit fluttered and failed, her body reacted, and so she had been carried, a helpless invalid, from the home she had made for us. And now her mind was working—working, never still, seeing in visions the life at Stonehouse, her children in all their occupations; wondering, worrying, while no news came through, up there in her lonely room at the end of all things, with no carriage passing.

Meanwhile life at Stonehouse went with a swing. Edward came home to find the damsons hanging thick as swarming bees, Maggie and Ruth cooking and teaing in their Petit Trianon just as he had planned for them. The sons Frank and Ned intrepid on their tall bicycles were touring the countryside, penetrating even as far as Dorset, arriving at Granny Stone's white with dust through the rough little lanes round Wal-ditch. Mary and Lucy writing in raptures of the Gloucester Festival, though Lucy says she had to stop her ears when they played Gounod's *Mors et Vita*, so horrible were the discords, so distracting the clash of sounds. Guy is preparing for Haileybury, Willie has been two terms at Eton, Faith is better and Christopher is to have a governess.

Miss Averill, Booboo's governess, was a good-looking young woman with a gift for teaching which



she lavished with enthusiasm on the quickest intelligence she had yet had to deal with. He made fantastic progress with his reading and writing; his letters were now the delight of his family, and Miss Averill never interfered with the spelling of them.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I went to Ramsgit with Father and met Mr. Abberneithi (Abernethy) and he jrov us back. Ask Loose (Lucy) to write me a letter. I hope you like your prmberlateter. Good-bye your loveing C.R.S.

A happy Cismes.

DEAR MOTHER,—It is such a rainne day. Ive been playing hosis. Im doing this letter all by my cellf. I hope you will come bak on Cismis.

Is this nice riting?

DEAR MOTHER,—Miss A this arfternoon did make the dollshouse so nice she made new kertins with laysis all down it I do laysins from toelve akerk to half-prst toelve-akerk, on Satterdays I dont do anny lasin atall.

Goodbye your loving C.R.S.

DARLING MOTHER,—Thankyou so much for the pretty shiling. I bought a carrice that runs about if you wind it up it is so nice.

I have a new spung. Mrs Isek gave me some chokcolates I sent Faith some with her pinnerfor and a long letter. Cuson bescy (Cousin Bessie) sent me six stumps this mroning. I have some medson to take my bump down. I have got toothaick agane. Did Faith get the dolls shose all right. We have got an ornermak (almanac) in here.

## STONEHOUSE

Miss A. had a game of hide the fimble one hides the fimble wile the outhier stands outside. I have got such a nice present for Faith it is a scent bottle it corst five pents, it stands.

I went to a party to Mrs. Grannt last night, they played at oringis and lemmens, and fox and giece, and Frence blind mans buff and I am on Tomtiderlours grond, (Tom Tiddler's Ground) and poor Mary sits a whipping and here we come garthering nuts and may, one room was for games ad the other for danceing. I danced the wallce, we stad from four to ieght.

We have had the trycekul mended and the brak put on.

Now I must begin about the consort. First we had some Vielin and chelo etc ect, you remember I said the brook and sang Old Mother Tabby-skins. The mouse had its foetoe taken with a bit of chok to look like cheese.

Yestoday we all went to the minnerrarmer.

dear sweet loving. Goodbye

your affectoirate

Christopher X X X X

Lily's solitude in the Isle of Man was broken by a visit from Mary, Christopher and me. A yellow crossing and a little boy in the next bunk being even sicker than I was, and then the Brows, a sort of heath with very dry heather, where we played outside the house in which Lily still lay helpless.

Victoria's Jubilee we celebrated in Ramsey. I remember only grilling sunshine and a lot of flags. I did not like it at all. I hated crowds then as much as I hate them now. I am fearful of humanity in a mass,

even in a comfortable cinema. A tube at rush hour has terror for me; I would rather go quietly down into a dangerous mine than face the horrors of Piccadilly Tube Station at 6.30 p.m.

In June of that Jubilee year, Lily was moved to Aigburth, a suburb of Liverpool, a jerry suburb, Edward calls it. The house is pretty enough, but it will not last long, he thinks. Here she is to be treated for inflammation of the spine, with cauterisation and leeches. Mary will be with her, but I must not, nor Christopher. Christopher is taken back to Stonehouse, and though I may not be with Lily, she will have me near her now. She can hardly let me out of her sight. A good school with a high moral tone must be found. What could be better than a Quaker School? Such a one was recommended near Southport, kept by three Quaker sisters of irreproachable character.

Unfortunately all the pupils of the Misses Nuttall's school were not on so high a plane as their teachers. There were plenty of decent girls, most of them daughters of North country manufacturers and tradesmen, but I shared a bedroom with three lively specimens whose conversation, though conjectural, was almost exclusively lascivious. This was a complete novelty to me, for in all my sheltered life I had never dreamed of the things I heard and saw. I was not nearly so shocked as I should have been, and joined merrily in the fun. But my serious shy manner in public did not change, and perhaps that is why pretty Mademoiselle who slept next door to us, and loved to take me on her lap, once, in the middle of a hug, whispered:

"Do you know what is a hypocrite, Faith, my darling?"

I said:

"Yes, I think so. Some one who pretends."

And she, as though apropos of nothing at all, murmured:

"I can hear all you say in your room, *ma petite chérie*."

That was all.

Every Sunday I woke with special reluctance. I knew that by my bed lay a clean pair of Jaeger combinations and a clean pair of Jaeger stockings. Those Jaeger combinations were of an incredible thickness and they washed into the consistency of leather lined with nettles. It was misery to force my body into this cruel sheath; even my arms were enveloped to the wrists. The stockings were rougher than the combinations and leaving nothing to chance were shaped like a baby's glove, with a partition for my big toe. No one else wore such garments and my companions used to jeer at my discomfort. The name of Jaeger nowadays suggests softness and luxury but then it signified—to me—dowdiness and discomfort. I never escaped from Jaeger all through my schooldays though the heaviness was slightly modified later on. It had one advantage. It never wanted mending and all the time I was at school I never mended my clothes; whatever wanted doing I took home in a bundle at half-term.

Lily was eccentric about clothes; so was I. I longed for a deerstalker cap and Lily said, "Why not, my dear?" A lovely beige velvet one was made for me just like a man's with flaps that could come down over one's ears if necessary. I took it to school and wore it on a Sunday.

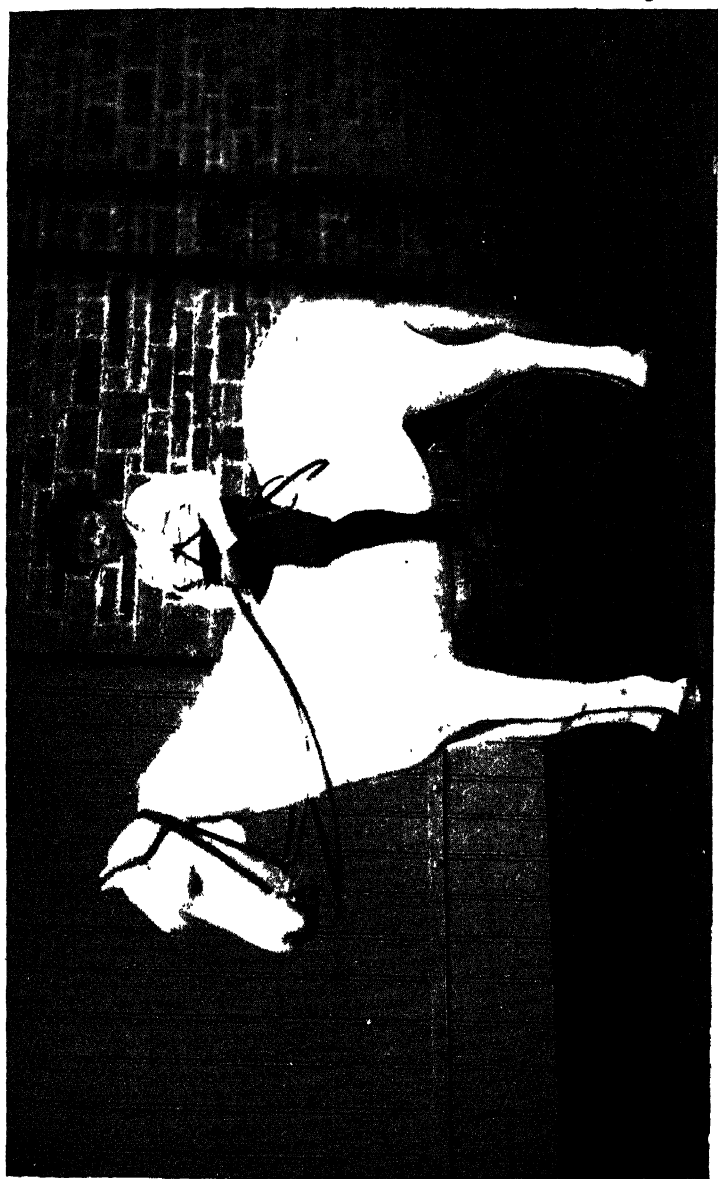
"Well," said Miss Laybourne, one of the senior

mistresses, "I wonder Mrs. Stone allows Faith to be such a sight in church!"

I cried and cried not because I was a sight in church but because my darling mother was criticised. What agony that is always, such rending of the bowels, such sickness of the heart! I put the cap away so that it should not be laughed at and defamed by stupid people, and Lily sent me an ordinary hat which looked just like any other little girl's.

Lily did not stay long at Aigburth; the cauterising and leeches were no good and Edward thought she should be in London to get the best advice possible. So he took a house for her, 49, Scarsdale Villas. The rent was £65 a year and the house exactly as it stands to-day. There was a grand move from Aigburth in a saloon carriage, Lily slung from the roof in a sort of hammock, myself being very sick on a sofa below. That was the end of the Quaker school for me. I must now be sent somewhere in the Kensington district, so that Lily could see me at week-ends. The Misses Allens' school and kindergarten in Avonmore Road was chosen for me. Miss Allen was large, robust, red-faced and alarming. Miss Josephine was a rather flabby second string with a perpetual cold that necessitated the use of innumerable gaily-coloured silk handkerchiefs, which I found cheering to look at in lesson time. I liked her better than her sister. A little boy used to come to the kindergarten. He lived in Avonmore Road, and his name was Monty Mackenzie. Years later he was to immortalise Avonmore Road as Carlington Road in *Sinister Street*. Unfortunately I cannot pretend that we ever spoke to each other then, but we did do lessons in the same room.

While I was being tossed from one school to another,



CHRISTOPHER STONE (AGED SIX) AT HALLSANERY



Frank and Ned were at King's, Cambridge, Will was in Luxmoore's house at Eton, Guy at Haileybury, Maggie, now become Margaret, and Ruth were at the Francis Holland High School for girls in Baker Street. Lucy's career as a violinist seemed assured. She had the friendship and admiration of Sir George Grove and Dr. Stanford; she played to Joachim, who had been less grumpy than usual; she had been engaged as soloist at the third Bach Choir Concert which was more of an honour than it might seem, for there were only three in a season and Joachim was the soloist at the second. Then she had met Emily Shinner, who was planning a "Ladies' Quartet," and wanted Lucy to play second violin. No sooner had Lucy accepted than she was ordered out to Australia by a specialist, who would not answer for the consequences if she did not leave at once. Edward put his hand in his pocket again and booked her passage in the *Orizaba*. She passed Stonehouse on her way out and spent about three months at Melbourne staying with the Lochs at Government House. She made more good friends there, and when she returned in the *Iberia*, not noticeably improved in health by the voyage, Stonehouse hoisted a huge placard on the roof with "Welcome Home" in large letters. Edward took a number of us to Tilbury. Arthur and Florrie Coleridge, father and sister of the poet Mary, her great friend, came too to meet her. There she was, on the deck waving her handkerchief, looking bright and brown and sweet as ever. "It was a blessed sight," says Edward. The luggage was collected. Where was Lucy's violin? "Oh," she blushed faintly, "Mr. — has taken care of it for me. Here he is."

A fair young man appeared and was introduced



but was soon forgotten, for a stranger with a white beard came up to Edward and said:

"May I ask, sir, whether you are Mr. Peppercorn Junior?"

On Edward's disclaimer, he added, "I trust an absence of thirty-three years may plead my excuse for the mistake."

After all this excitement we went to Scarsdale Villas where Margaret was waiting with a late lunch and Lily seeming almost her old self for the thrill of seeing Lucy again. She knew at once that something besides a voyage to Australia and back had happened to Lucy. Some one had fallen in love with her. It did not take Lily long to get at the truth about the fair young man.

"You don't love him, my dear childr" It was hardly a question. Lily's dread of marriage for her children was strong. She had confidence in the family bond which so far had been enough for them all. Besides, the fair young man, though of good family, had no means to speak of. For some time Lucy wavered, but after a few weeks she said to Lily:

"Will you please ask Father to write, Mother darling, and put him out of his pain."

No one ever knew how much was pain to her. She never spoke of him and as far as I know she never cared for any one else.

I did not stay long at Miss Allen's. London did not agree with me. I was sent to where I was always happiest, Creting in Suffolk, where Uncle Furse ("Uncle Dad"), Aunt Lucy (who as Lucy Cunliffe had been Lily's best friend), and about a dozen children lived in the modern Gothic Rectory. Here my passion for the horse was fostered. I rode the Exmoor pony

Mitre, on whom they had all learned to ride. We cavalcaded through the Suffolk lanes, my cousins mounted on thoroughbred Arabs. I can see them now in a wild streaming canter through the fields, tails and manes flying, while I pegged along after them on little Mitre. When I was not riding I was reading *Black Beauty* and studying *The Book of the Horse*, vowing to devote my life to securing the abolition of the cruel bearing-rein, the instrument of torture, and the rowelled spur.

Uncle Dad broke in his own horses, and sometimes I held the cavasan rein for him, while the lovely creature circled round and round me, showing the white of one wild eye. The most beautiful horse of all I thought was Esau, creamy as milk, and then Nazalie, the chestnut mare, smooth and gracious in line, her exquisite little head held high and proud. Her mother Naomi and her sister Kushdil were chestnut too, but she was just a few fingers higher than they. There is a sketch of her, done by J. H. Furse the sculptor, brother of Charles, in black and white crayon, where she stands meditative, a study in grace and poise. The Exmoor, Mitre, had a large family of half-Arabs, dainty little ponies, very quick and smart—Coquette, Mimi, Beauty, Grisette, Dolly Varden and Beau. I rode Coquette when I had passed the Mitre stage. Other full-blooded Arabs were Shemseh, Kantaka, Zuleika, Nimma and Hermes.

Kismet was, however, the king of the stables. He was a brilliant bay, with three white stockings and a blaze down his nose. But alas, poor Kismet! Uncle Dad sent him to be sold in America when he went to judge Arabs at the Chicago Exhibition. Kismet died of sea-sickness on the way out.

The history of Esau is romantic enough. The beautiful creature was always full of tricks, one of which I remember well. It was when Guy and I were staying at Creeting, and we went riding in a party of about six, Guy mounted on Esau, myself on Mitre. Esau knew he had a tyro on his back, and was soon off like lightning at full gallop down the road. In about ten minutes he was back again and rushed past us like the wind, Guy still sticking on, but his hat gone and a scared look in his eye. This joke went on almost throughout the ride, enveloping us in a cloud of dust each time they flew by, until at last they disappeared altogether. Then I began to cry. Perhaps Guy was dead.

"Oh, no," said Uncle Dad calmly. "You'll find him at home. It's only Esau's games. He doesn't mean any harm."

He was right. Guy had mastered Esau (so he said), and they ended on quite friendly terms. Esau was in the stables and Guy was reading *Huckleberry Finn*.

Most unwillingly Uncle Dad sold Esau at a good price some time after this episode.

He had been sold some years before, a day when Uncle Dad had to go up to London for some ecclesiastical business.

"I do hope your father will keep away from Tattersall's," said Aunt Lucy. "There seems to be a big sale on."

Every one agreed that it would be better if he stuck to the ecclesiastical business.

He went to Tattersall's, of course, and in the catalogue spied an item that interested him. "An old white Arab, no history." He was told that this was a bad-tempered brute, which no one could go near.

"No good to you, Mr. Vidal."

"I'd like to have a look, though."

There was the ferocious beast, rushing at the groom who came to the gate of his box. Uncle Dad called in his own peculiar "horse voice":

"Esau! Esau! Come here, pretty dear." He entered the box.

"Pretty dear!"

The old horse came straight to him and nuzzled at his hand. It was indeed Esau, thin and straggle legged, a poor unhappy misunderstood creature who had never forgotten his best friend. Uncle Dad immediately bought him for a few pounds. The next scene in this drama is the fierce Esau being led like a lamb through the traffic by Uncle Dad himself to Liverpool Street Station, where a horse-box was chartered. He became unmanageable the moment he was touched by the men, and Uncle Dad not only had to lead him into the box but to travel in it with him.

The old horse came home rejoicing, sniffing the country lanes he knew and remembered, greeting the family with loud grunts of happiness but refusing to have anything to do with Kent, who had been his groom in the old days. Alas! his memory had been blotted out by much cruelty. The sight of a groom sent him into a panic. He would have nothing to do with any one but the Vidal family. He was able to do a little work, but most of his time was spent in the meadows, playing hide-and-seek with the children, hiding behind a tree and giving a loud snort when he was ready, and chasing them up and down with mock ferocity. His sense of humour was completely restored, his poor old legs filled out, and his tail was carried as proudly as in his youth.

His love of high jinks brought his end. One day he was dashing round in a wild game, and in a sudden turn broke one of his hind legs. He came limping up to show the dangling limb. It was some time before a vet could be fetched from Stowmarket, and when he came his advice was a bullet. Uncle Dad was away and no one dared to decide without his consent. His reply to the telegram sent him was, "Do what is best for Esau." So the old horse was dead and buried before his master came home.

Besides riding or reading *The Book of the Horse* I was sometimes called upon to accompany Uncle Dad in Beethoven's *Adelaide*. He had a sweet but not entirely reliable tenor voice which had been trained in Paris, where he had spent a good deal of his youth very gaily, with no thought of a clerical career. He tells how he sang one night at a musical soirée, when a cheery old gentleman came up and congratulated him on his voice, and insisted upon accompanying his next song. It was Rossini, who was ending his days in Passy, composing jokes for the piano, and cooking for his friends.

The church was decidedly an afterthought in the case of Uncle Dad, just as it was for his father, the handsome grandfather who died before I was born. Francis Vidal was born in Jamaica, and his family had many generations ago emigrated there from Spain. He was sent to Eton with the largest pocket-money allowance ever known to boy, and extravagant tastes which he was able to gratify until his father died, leaving a very poor heritage. Affairs had gone badly for rich Jamaicans after the Emancipation Act of 1834. Freed slaves refused to work under any conditions

and labour was not to be had. Sugar plantations went to ruin and rum factories had to shut down.

The most gentlemanly and least exacting occupation that presented itself to Francis Vidal was the Church, and it was while he was a curate at Torrington that he met and married Mary Theresa Johnson. He was not the kind to be satisfied with a conventional clergyman's life, and after a year or two in a Devonshire parish he became Chaplain to Exeter Gaol. The strain of this work, however, was very great, and he suffered a specially nerve-racking period in which he had to attend to two unfortunate men condemned to death and awaiting their end in ghastly damp cells. One man was innocent, and my grandfather after strenuous and fruitless efforts to get the sentence commuted had to prepare the wretched victim for execution. This harrowing experience shattered his nerves, and he was ordered complete rest. This he took on board the *Earl Grey*, an emigrant ship bound for Sydney. The young convict settlement in New South Wales attracted him, and clergy were much needed. Besides that, there were farming prospects not to be despised. So in the face of fierce opposition he set forth with his wife and family of three boys on what was then a great adventure. He took with him also his brother George, who became Bishop of Sydney, his cousin Robert Allwood, who made a fortune, two maids from Torrington and half a dozen New Forest hounds, a cross between blood and stag-hounds.

Lily was born at Minchenburg in New South Wales in 1841. Her eldest brother Furse knelt at his mother's knee as she sat in the veranda with the baby on her lap. She said:

"Her name is to be Elizabeth Theresa after her two grandmothers but we shall always call her Lily because she is so white."

Perhaps it was because she was born in that spacious young country that the oppression of Eton's four prison walls weighed so heavily later on. The life out there was strange and rather exciting. Grandpapa bought his farm and became incumbent of the small church of Penrith. The country was full of unhappy people who had been dumped at Botany Bay and imprisoned in Sydney until by good conduct they earned the privilege of going into service with settlers, who fed and clothed them but gave them no wages; if they misbehaved a complaint was made to the nearest magistrate and they were flogged or sent back to gaol. This abominable system led to all sorts of evils. Not all the settlers were fit for such responsibility, and the cruelty and injustice suffered by the wretched men and women in their employ drove them into a state of desperation. They took to the Bush, became bushrangers, robbing and murdering without restraint, knowing that they were doomed to the gallows.

Jacky-Jacky was the most famous of all the bushrangers. No one could catch him, though troops of mounted police had been on his track, and he had shot several of them. One day Grandpapa was driving into Penrith when his horse suddenly stopped. A man dressed in green appeared over the fence and cocked a carbine as he did so. It was Jacky-Jacky.

"Good-day," said my grandfather.

"Stop that nonsense. I want to get this business done quick. The police are after me. Out with your money."

Grandpapa held out five shillings, all he had with him.

"None of those pocket-pistol tricks. Throw it down. Now turn out your pockets."

There was nothing but a bunch of keys.

"Now drive on or I will shoot you."

"Oh, no. I'm not going to drive on yet. You have had your say, and now I'm going to talk to you." He gave him a little lecture as from one man of the world to the other, and finished up with:

"And now you've robbed a clergyman almost within sight of his church!"

The superstitious Jacky-Jacky begged F.V. to take back the money.

"I didn't know you were the parson, sir, I wouldn't rob a parson for all the world could give me. Don't think too hardly of me, sir——" and he told him some of his story, which F.V. found intensely moving.

"Please, sir," said Jacky-Jacky at the end. "Don't put the police on me."

F.V. promised he would not, but on his way back from Penrith a sergeant of police rode up and asked if he had seen any one suspicious on the road, as they had information that Jacky-Jacky was about. F.V. told a white lie, but the sergeant persisted in riding beside the gig, and he was in terror lest Jacky-Jacky should see them and think that he had fetched the police and betrayed him. But Jacky-Jacky was miles away, and all was well.

The astonishing creature was captured a short time afterwards by two gentlemen travelling in a gig. They caught him napping—asleep in a ditch. He was bound hand and foot, and put between them in the gig. When they were passing through a gully full of



underbrush Jacky-Jacky suddenly threw up his legs, turned a somersault over the back of the gig, and disappeared. Bound hand and foot, he somehow got clean away. But the poor desperate fellow was caught at last after murdering two more policemen and was executed. It would have been pleasant to report that F.V.'s lecture had reformed him, but this was unfortunately not the case.

Besides bushrangers there was danger from natives. They stole cattle, and anything else they could lay their hands on, nor were they above murdering a shepherd or stockman if it suited them. One afternoon when all the men were away cattle-branding, my grandmother was at the piano absorbed in Mozart, the children playing noisily in the veranda. After a time she became conscious that the noise of the children had ceased, and that they were pressing round her, with pale faces. She went on playing but turned her head to meet a grinning black face watching her hands on the keys. Then she saw that the room was full of black people, standing there silent, intent on the music.

She went on playing. Horror was in her heart, but she smiled at them, and broke into a Scotch reel, played and played, gay tunes, sad tunes, anything that came into her head, whispering all the time to the children not to worry, to keep quiet. For over an hour she played that piano and still the natives stood there silent. Then the welcome bark of a dog heralded the return of the men. She wound up with a brilliant finale, almost fainting with exhaustion, and suddenly rose from her seat. Smiling at the chief, she shook his hand, and led him to the veranda, while the children clung to her gown. The natives followed quietly, and she signed to them to sit on the lawn, and called to the

men to bring empty sugar bags and pails of water which she distributed herself. This was apparently the natives' favourite luxury. They sucked the bags, got pleasantly drunk and went off home. They had come with the most sinister intentions knowing that the men were away, but the music and the beauty of my grandmother had enchanted them. They looked upon her as a supernatural being, and were from that moment perfectly harmless.

Grandpapa on his solitary rides through the Bush had many hairbreadth adventures, but he had great *sang froid* and escaped from the stickiest situation by sheer courage and quickness of thought. One night he lost his way, and stopped at a hut to ask directions. He met eight bushrangers coming out fully armed for a raid. He realised he had come to the wrong place, but knew he was in for it and must not show any fear. Most of them went off, leaving him in the hut with a sentry by the door and a Jew, who was evidently the owner of the hut. They offered him food, which he felt obliged to accept, and, what was worse, had to sit at a flap table against the wall with his back to the room. He endured this as long as he could, his mind working at lightning speed to contrive his escape. Then he suddenly rose from his seat, turned to the Jew who was standing behind him, grasped him firmly by the hand, and rushing to the door shook hands fervently with the sentry, thanking them both for their hospitality, and before they knew what had happened, he was away at full gallop through the Bush. He heard their shots behind him.

Mrs. Vidal had unique servant troubles out there. The two Torrington maids married and there followed a succession of difficult characters, some of them

convicts, some of them settlers, but each one a problem of some kind. It was at this time that Mrs. Vidal wrote her *Tales for the Bush*, a series of shortish stories which admirably served her own purpose. They were written for her staff, in a high moral tone. The heroine was almost invariably a servant, and her mistress was a kind generous lady whose admonitions were always to the point and gratefully received. For instance, Marion Martin, who had been brought up in bad ways, in service with a Mrs. Grey, was tempted by the pudding which she had to take from the hall table, after the footman had left it there, and carry down to the kitchen. She dipped her fingers in it, and it was so nice that she took to tasting the puddings every day. It was found out, and Mrs. Grey said:

"You know, Marion, it is wicked to steal."

"Yes, ma'am, but sure I didn't think *that* was stealing."

"Many people who turn out great thieves *begin* only in that way. It is a temptation that every servant has, more or less. . . . If you go on in this way, by and by you will take greater things, you will forget that it is wrong."

Marion thought at the time that Mrs. Grey was very stingy to grudge her a little pudding, but she soon realised how right she was. That chapter ends, "Mrs. Grey expected what was sent into the parlour was to be taken care of, and not fingered or tasted after it came out."

Here was a warning for all maids that came into Mrs. Vidal's service. Another thing that Marion had to be taught was dusting a room. Mrs. Grey kindly pointed out how she had left the *corners untouched*, and made her do it again. With these homely little details

my grandmother set out in her very readable stories the whole duty of a maid to her mistress with a stress on the sad fate of those who failed in that duty.

*Tales for the Bush* was first published in Australia, but Joseph Masters of 78 New Bond Street brought out at least five editions of it. It is goody-goody to the last degree, but it has skilful character drawing and is written in an easy simple style. There was little that Grandmother Vidal could not do if she tried. Her music was first class and she was an accomplished artist in water-colours. There is hardly a letter of hers in those Australian days that is not headed with an exquisite coloured sketch of some landscape which has attracted her, or a delicate spray of flowers. The little books that she made and decorated for her children were enchanting and quite free from the odour of sanctity.

Mr. Vidal left Australia after five years, partly because of a promise to bring his wife home again in that time and partly because the boys were then of an age for school. He wanted them all to go to Eton and because he could not afford to pay their board as oppidans he took a small house in the town so that they could live at home. In the end only Furse, George and Welly fell in with this scheme, for Charley and Jack joined the Navy, and the youngest, Leonard, went into the Indian Army. George made a name in India as a Civil Servant, and was a member of the Cabinet, Charley the best looking, and Lily's favourite, died of consumption before he got his ship. Jack was inventive and a good many of his ideas were adopted by the Navy. He spent his spare time making delicate little tea-sets and brooches out of threepenny bits, and before any one thought of electric bells he installed one in

his father's dining-room. Another of his ingenuities was a mechanism in his small chicken farm by which the early hen waking and stepping towards the door of her house automatically opened the doors of all the other hen houses, thus allowing their owner to sleep until a reasonable hour. Welly was the only scholar in the family, and he was gifted much as our Will was with a beauty and strangeness of character which was of another world. His story is told in his daughter Lois Vidal's *Magpie*, which Faber and Faber published in 1934, and I need not add to it.

There is nothing shadowy about those beloved figures of childhood. They and they only shine with a radiance through the murk of time, undimmed. They have not grown old; their outlines still stand clear against the empty background of a child's life, without confusion of detail. . . . There is Aunt Lucy, framed in the porch of Creeting Rectory, waiting to greet me as I come sitting beside Gwynedd, who has met me at Needham Market with the wagonette. I have sat in a trance behind those two beauties Naomi and her daughter Kushdil, watching their swinging trot and flashing tails for five miles, almost speechless with excitement.

Now I am in Aunt Lucy's arms. She is such a little woman, she scarcely has to bend to kiss me. Her laughing brown eyes scan my pale face, always paler from excitement, her hand strokes my bare head, for of course I wear no hat. I am back at Creeting again with its horses and dogs and my cousins who spoil me. Gwynedd is the eldest girl and is beautiful on a horse. She has the best seat in the country, second only to her father's. Maud is there too, whom I loved as an

elder sister. . . . When she married, she passed on the animal-loving strain generously. Pony clubs, model dairies, and much hunting, including the training of hounds, are the major occupations of her children and grandchildren. Spanish riding attracted one granddaughter, and she went as a great favour to the famous Viennese Imperial School of Haute École, and rode glorious Lippazana horses. She made amazing progress in the difficult art, and would have had a career, but marriage turned her mind from it. As she does not regret it no one else must, but what a chance that seemed for a six-foot girl who was made for a horse!

Uncle Dad is in the hall where he has a corner for his hobby, wood-carving. He works in very high relief with bold rather rough designs, and goes in for size. If he had been a sculptor he would have started off on an equestrian statue. He comes out when he hears the carriage and swings me round with a devilish look. He is an alluring person, Uncle Dad, and I am shy and fascinated. He wears riding-breeches and an old grey coat. There is nothing in the least parsonic about his appearance or manner, and his handsome face is illuminated by a pair of glittering mischievous eyes. The most exquisite and fearful amusement at Creting is hide-and-seek in the house with Uncle Dad pursuing us. When he catches us he tickles our knees which is more than any one can bear. . . . He is an ideal parson for a sporting country and is enormously respected and loved. A queer mixture, artist and sportsman, with more devil than angel about him and the bearing of a Conquistador.

And now I am looking for my love. Where is he?

I have long ago decided to marry the fourth son Donald, and when he appears round the corner of the house followed by several terriers, I rush at him and we are lost in a fervent embrace while dogs leap and bark around us. I loved Donald for several years and I cannot think why, when I was giving presents to every one at Creeting, I gave him Sir Walter Scott's Poems. It showed an almost brutal disregard for his literary taste, which was exclusively Badminton Library.

The Creeting boys, with one exception, emigrated to the Colonies. Donald went to the West Indies planting something or other, and died of fever at the age of twenty-one. He was an enchanting boy with his father's wonderful eyes, and the perfect manners that go with a great heart. Our friendship had faded when he died; I was in love with him till I was fifteen but not exclusively. At twelve I had a wild passion for one of the Stonehouse boys. Our love was told eloquently in signs and glances. Lily was quite aware of it and when I lay in a state of despair on the drawing-room sofa after seeing off the brakes that took the boys away for the holidays, she stood looking at me quizzically.

"Cheer up! This is not just a headache, is it?"

But she was not always so accommodating.

The Honour Class, a weekly selection of the better behaved boys, was invited every week to play card games in the drawing-room. If enough alphas were gained, the whole school had an extra holiday. We gambled with counters at Garry King, *Vingt-et-Un*, and a walking race game. Two exquisite little men in red and light blue satin walked hurriedly round and round a painted pavilion, to which they were attached by horizontal wires, their legs strutting along very



A GROUP AT STONE HOUSE





naturally. I have never seen a replica of this elegant toy. It was a popular gamble, and generally wound up the evening.

My beloved was nearly always in the Honour Class. When he was, such a battery of glances went on all evening that the air must have been full of sparks. Lily gave her ultimatum one night when the party was over.

"Faith, if you roll your eyes at the boys like this you will not be allowed to come to card games."

She knew I was rolling them at one boy only but she preferred to evade what might have been tiresome complications.

I was desperately in love but we had fewer words alone together than Dante and Beatrice. It was all looks and longings and very stimulating. Edward used to read aloud to the boys after tea in his study. No one was obliged to listen, but the study was always full of boys, boys on the floor, boys everywhere, listening intently to his beautiful exciting reading of Dickens, Stanley Weyman, Conan Doyle, Q, Mark Twain and the rest of them. I used to go to these readings as often as possible, and my Dante was always there. Once when I entered he silently clapped his hands. The thrill of that moment! It warms me still. We never told our love, but certainly did not let concealment like a worm i' the bud feed on our damask cheeks.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PEACOCKS

1887 to 1890 were vintage years at Stonehouse. Edward in his most optimistic dreams had not visualised a full house of nearly forty boys. He bought the farm across the road, partly to prevent possible building, partly to supply his own produce for the school. He planted more and more trees and was always improving the house, adding bathrooms and modern amenities. (When we first went to Stonehouse there was no bathroom in all that great building.)

The old grey horse, Ironsides, who had nearly killed Lily at Burnham Beeches years ago, came to spend his old age at Stonehouse. He was twenty-nine by this time, and it was thought he might manage a little light carting on the farm, and to roll the cricket pitch wearing leather shoes. But he was a horse of endless vitality, and was soon a striking figure on the white roads, dashing along with the luggage cart, his mouth like leather and the bit well between his teeth.

He shared the stable with a chestnut ex-polo pony called Stella, the property of Raoul Herz, one of the boys, (son of Cornelius Herz of Panama Canal fame), and a bay cob which Monty James had bought for us with dog-cart and harness complete. His bright colour suggested the name Cherry, and Mary and I were in ecstasies over his charm and beauty. He was such a "kind little thing." We didn't like the harness that

came with him, and we persuaded Edward to buy a new set without blinkers, which we thought would be so much smarter.

It is not very surprising, therefore, that Lily received this letter from Christopher shortly afterwards:

DEAR MOTHER,—I am sad about Mary and Lucy. I nearly went out of my mind, I had to help Faith of her horse and I ran done the drive and when I got half done I heard the pony running up the road and I stood still and after a minute I had to run for the pony came in so I ran back into the front and began shouting and when I was shouting I suppose the pony was getting the bit of carriage of. Then Cousin Bessie and Father went with me and I saw a crowd of people but not any (blot) of them but when I was going up I saw Mary and Lucy they were covered with blood. I will write you another letter soon,

Goodbye,  
your loving C.R.S.

This incoherent letter full of large agonised blots gives a vivid enough glimpse of the carriage accident which might have killed Mary and Lucy as well as Will.

“Dear little Cherry” looked so smart in his brown harness without blinkers, and we set off that afternoon round the North Foreland road to Kingsgate and back past Elmwood where the Harmsworths lived. Mary was driving, Lucy beside her, and Will and a cousin at the back. I was riding behind them on Stella. As I was not allowed to ride alone, I made a practice of following the dogcart. At this period I rode to school

every day, but always accompanied. I resented very much not being allowed to ride alone. There was plenty of riding with the boys; twice a week hired horses came over from Hodgman's, Ramsgate, and we had good gallops over the sands. This was the time of my passion for "Dante" and we often rode side by side.

On that unforgettable accident day we had jogged along without incident till we were nearly home. The flint wall that surrounds Stonehouse made a sharp curve where the little garden gate is set which Edward noticed when he first came to look at the house. The hill he had driven up joined the road that skirted the grounds and where they joined there was a bad slope which made that turn very dangerous, and it was always carefully manœuvred.

To my horror, I saw Cherry suddenly set off at a wild gallop down the road about two hundred yards from the dangerous corner. Something he saw with his unblinkered eye may have startled him. I pulled up Stella, knowing that the worst must happen, and that I could do nothing to stop it. I dreaded what I should see at the corner. As I went down the road I heard the crash and saw people running up the hill. Among them was a doctor. He was already leaning over Mary when I got to the spot. There my sisters lay, motionless against the tarred fence of the shrubbery, two forlorn crumpled figures, with blood, as Christopher said, all over them. Will and the other boy were unhurt. My first impulse was to get Stella to the stables, so I trotted in at the gates and there in the drive was "dear little Cherry," munching at something green, with half the dogcart attached to him. There also was Christopher, who had seen Cherry and knew that something dreadful had happened. He

screamed and screamed in front of the house till Edward came out and I suppose they went together down to the little gate, but I rode on to the stable and put Stella in her stall. Then I saw Mary and Lucy carried into the house unconscious.

It was a miracle that they were not more seriously injured. They both had to be sewn up, Lucy's forehead and Mary's chin. Mary's stitches had to be renewed because when she got better she laughed too much.

But Mary's high spirits had been severely tested during the years of Lily's banishment. The strain of nursing a nervous illness tries the hardest and she was in constant demand at Scarsdale Villas. Every one felt the sadness of Edward and Lily's separation, and to Mary, who witnessed the suffering of the invalid and knew the divine patience and devotion of Edward, the tragedy of it was almost unbearable. It was when she had come home to Stonehouse after a specially heartbreaking spell at Scarsdale, that she went to bed one night to the room she was sharing with Christopher. He lay in his little bed in a far corner of the room, the one candle shaded from him, and the silence intense. For a moment she forgot the sleeping child, and in her weariness exclaimed:

"Oh, I am so *tired*!"

There was a pause, and then she heard a gentle sobbing from the bed. He was not asleep!

"What is it, my darling?"

"Oh, I am so sorry you are so tired!"

This little episode is characteristic of the compassion that is the keynote of Christopher's character. It is not merely his personal charm, his unaffected voice, nor his disarming casualness which makes him loved in so many little homes.

"He is with us in the room," they say, when he broadcasts, and because he is Christopher it does them good to have him there. They know the real thing when they get it, and they know its value. It "comes over" without interference.

"Little Xtof has just come in. He is the delight of my eyes, as ever," wrote Edward years ago when Christopher was five.

There are stars in every family, and the two brightest in ours were Will and Christopher. Christopher was born to give permanent happiness; Will was a peculiar joy to his friends, but he belonged to another world and could not stay.

Mary, Christopher and I went on a tour of the West country in 1890. We kept a copious diary of every event, however small, for Lily in London. These diaries, in small note-paper volumes sewn together by Mary and decorated outside by me, are as carefully preserved as Edward's letters to his mother. I believe that not a scrap of his lovely writing was thrown away. That flowing elegant hand is as easy to the eyes as print, and it used to be fascinating to watch the swift dexterity of his pen as it seemed to float over the smooth Silurian paper he nearly always used.

Our diary was only decorative so far as Mary's writing was concerned. Her hand was as clear and distinguished as Edward's, with feminine grace added. She wrote a detailed bulletin of our health and behaviour every day. We learn that Christopher was in a constant state of excitement about Faith's birthday, full of plans for giving her presents and asking to be called at six on the day. Mary finds us the best children possible, "because it is rather unsteady and spoiling to go about visiting people like this." For months

we wandered round, staying first at Stoke Hill near Exeter, where our cousin Rhodes James lived. Here the exciting prospect of a small home farm nearly wrecked our stay with the touchy old gentleman, for we had not been in the house more than an hour when a loud trumpet from his nose brought Christopher rushing out on to the landing, shouting:

“Mary, is that the cow?”

Cousin Rhodes lived in a Jane Austen house with a roofed veranda on the south side. Steep Devonshire lanes approached it from above and below. From the sloping garden we could see Exeter through autumnal mists, and there was a pleasant wood but not one fairy. There was not a very happy atmosphere about the place, though Rhodes and his daughters were kind to us and he gave us half a sovereign when we left for his brother's place Halsannery near Bideford. This was a very much more amusing visit. The leading spirit of the place was the youngest daughter Sarita, who as George Ford wrote some advanced novels. Though there were several other daughters it was she who kept the house going, and if she did not order all the meals days ahead when she was going away, there was panic and desperation. She spent much time with photography and took the pathetic picture of Christopher on the white pony Pip. I spoilt every group I was in by laughing from sheer nervousness. It pleased her to dress Mary up and do studies of her. All the daughters had their own work or play rooms, and pursued their hobbies undisturbed. It was a typical well-to-do Victorian household, with Cousin Boucher at its head, a kind white-bearded man who loved children but was shy of them because he was deaf.



I was less shy at Halsannery than anywhere except Creeting. There was the same atmosphere of warmth and understanding, and I did not feel that every one was thinking me a peculiar little girl, which was one of my obsessions. If Christopher was more admired than I was I did not feel it, which may have been their good manners. I was never jealous of him; I loved him too much. But I was painfully conscious of my repellant shyness which contrasted so sharply with his sweet and never aggressive bonhomie. With most of my own family at Creeting and Halsannery I was at ease and not bad company. But I was a failure at parties.

It was a wrench for us all three leaving Halsannery. I have never been there since but I still remember the sensation of driving away from the great porch of that solid Georgian house with its air of serene content, parting from people who had made us happy without any apparent effort and who seemed really sorry to lose us.

Granny Stone's house at Walditch was always open to Edward's children, and here we landed on our travels on a damp evening in time for dinner. This long meal was at 5.30 precisely; at 8.30 China tea was elaborately served in the drawing-room. Stereoscopic photographs and a solitaire board with glass marbles were produced for our amusement. The parrot was put to bed in his corner but said "Good-night" politely in Aunt Edith's voice if you looked in at him.

Aunt Edith poured out tea while Granny sat in her arm-chair, her handsome old face wreathed by a frothy lace cap threaded with purple velvet ribbons, a black Maltese lace shawl round her shoulders, or if the night was chilly, a pearl grey Kashmir with pink

roses. A perfect picture of a comfortable old lady in pleasant circumstances spending the winter of her life in the home she herself had planned, cherished by affectionate children and faithful servants who were her friends. A placid life, with few incidents to break its smooth monotony.

Yet long ago, in that peaceful little city of Dorchester where her happy married life was spent, she had cried in anguish:

“He was my idol, and God has shattered him!”

Her husband, whom she adored, had cut his throat.

He was an intensely good and religious man. Religion had turned to mania and that was why he died. Granny found no consolation for his loss until spiritualism came to her rescue. She was in constant communication with his alleged spirit, and she and Aunt Edith lived in a little world of friends who had “passed over.”

Aunt Edith was a tiny morsel of a woman like a shrivelled walnut, shrinking with the years until there was scarcely anything to be seen of her inside the knitted tippet she always wore round her rheumatic shoulders. She had none of Edward’s looks, was even plain, I suppose, but she was another of those extraordinary people whom my childhood took for granted, a creature of pure goodness and integrity. And to us beautiful, because of her kindness, and I hope to Granny too, for she devoted her whole life to her. And then when Granny died, to Uncle Walter, who was Edward’s younger brother, a cripple who should have been very tall and strong, a man of powerful intellect but painful sensitiveness. His huge head, his wild passionate eyes, his great well-shaped hands, were cruelly ill-matched by the crooked hunch-backed

body. He was an authority on Shakespeare, and his library, which was inherited by Christopher, contained at least one original folio. His other enthusiasm was archæology and he was responsible for a great deal of the excavation work in his native Dorset. He was shy of us as we were of him, but we were conscious of his benevolence under the cold aloof manner. When he stayed with us at Stonehouse all the striking clocks had to be stopped, he had such a horror of time passing.

We sat up late at Granny Stone's. She was all for good living and getting the best out of life. She disapproved of the "Blue Ribbon Army," which had swept the country in the '80's, and refused to sign the pledge. "Thank God," she says in her memoirs, "for the progress of the age, which I believe and hope in, though I do not wish for total abstinence. I love to think of a time when the human race may be able to enjoy with thankfulness God's gifts as He intended, generously and fully, and when their abuse may be only a tale of the past."

In no one was spiritualism more amicably blended with materialism. She was given to psychic dreams, and was one of the most convinced spiritualists of her day, but no one had a more fastidiously loaded table, a better taste in wines, or a home more carefully designed for comfort, modest though it was. Old-fashioned comfort, even for those days. Four-posters in all the bedrooms hung with finely embroidered curtains, and bulging with feather mattresses. By each bed an article of furniture which fascinated us, a cleverly camouflaged commode in the shape of a small flight of stairs, three of them, covered with carpet, the top one opening to disclose its astonishing purpose. It was one of the best toys in the house.

I have already mentioned the garden, which in those days was a blessed tangle of weeds and flowers, with only old Daniel to look after it. A brook meandered through it, with banks rich in ferns and flowers. It was there we saw the *little people* without surprise. Above the garden towered the Hill, perfect in shape, at its apex Uncle Walter's wooden retreat with a small group of pines behind it. Sometimes we did lessons up there, but Mary was as much distracted by the purple, green and gold Dorset landscape that stretched beneath us as we were. In fact Mary always welcomed lovely distractions even in lesson time, and that is why we learned so much from her.

Some peacocks were offered to Edward by the Provost of King's. What a perfect decoration they would be for Stonehouse! Their iridescence was just what was wanted to enliven the evergreen garden. There were plenty of flowers everywhere now but never enough colour for Edward. So the peacocks came. They strutted and squawked and squealed about the lawn, pecking at the flower-beds ("Pavo Maximus very naughty: picking heads off the violets," says Edward), fouling the walks with immense droppings and shedding in due season their splendid tails. Christopher and I stalked them and gathered bunches of the lovely feathers. Soon the drawing-room was full of those gleaming eyes.

"How delicious the peacock feathers look! I wish the dear birds didn't wake me at three in the morning, though," said Mary.

That there could be anything ominous in the presence of these creatures did not apparently occur to anybody. They were so handsome and amusing to watch as they shivered their quills, spreading their

tails in a frenzy of pride and passion, while the hens pecked serenely at the grass, implying by their perky indifference that if they only knew how ridiculous they looked behind, their masters would not give themselves quite so many airs.

Everything was going swimmingly at the school and the family gave no anxiety. Frank had found his niche from which he would not budge for many a year, at Radley as science master, and incidentally he was a leading spirit in the musical life of that school. Ned was firmly established at Eton, Will had won an exhibition at King's, and Guy had at last found his bent. There had been a good deal of anxiety about the future of this eccentric boy. What does one do with a son who rejects all the obvious avenues to life? Perhaps a solicitor's office? Guy put his feet up on the mantelpiece and firmly went on reading *Huckleberry Finn*, the only book he ever read, and he and Willie knew it by heart. It seemed that Guy would be for ever with his feet on the mantelpiece reading *Huckleberry Finn*. He was given a chance of Cambridge with the rest, but one term was enough to prove that it was a useless expense. Canada solved the problem at last. At his own request, he was sent to a distant relation (a clergyman, of course) who took farming pupils in Ontario. There he is still, with a busy fruit farm and a reasonably large family, for he married very early one of his host's daughters, in spite of Lily's protests against saddling himself with domestic cares at the age of twenty.

He has worked much harder than any of us and, moreover, writes a letter Mark Twain might have envied. So much for the black sheep of a near white family.

Lily came home at last at the end of 1890. She came in an invalid carriage and was greeted by wind and rain, "a disagreeable change (of weather) to welcome her home again," wrote Edward. But she bore up bravely and was in good spirits, happy to be home again after five years' exile. "Landed her at last in her own room with much joy and thankfulness."

The 5th of November fireworks were put off for her coming:

We confounded the politics of the Pope, *writes Edward*, with spitting of crackers and hissing of squibs, and spouting of Roman candles and whirring of Catherine wheels, and exultant upshoot of rockets and red and yellow Bengal lights showing up in clear relief the front of the house and the dark trees. Fire-balloons were started successfully, and soared away seawards.

All this Lily watched from her window and was naturally rather tired, but she has come pretty well through it.

What did Lily think of the "politics of the Pope" and their confounding? In a few months she was to startle Edward and every one else by her conversion. At Scarsdale Villas she had been reading hard; she had been searching so long for something that would give her spiritual strength to master her bodily weakness and at last she had found it. She was received at Farm Street; her instructor was Father Gallwey, and though she was still delicate and often tired, the change in her mental and physical health might almost be described as a miracle. She needed that extra strength, for 1891 was to be a tragic year in the history of Stonehouse.

I began it with a dangerous throat and was cut off from every one by a carbolic sheet hung at the entrance to Poets' Corner. Doubtless this was due to drains which were found to be defective, and cost Edward £500 to put right in the summer holidays, besides the renting of another house large enough to hold us all temporarily. The farm, too, was a fearful burden, and the bailiff in clover, for Edward's habit of trusting everybody made it perfectly easy to cheat on a large scale. The mutton was good and so was the bacon, but neither was worth the enormous outlay.

"When will my responsibilities end?" he cried.

The shock of Lily's conversion was a heavy one. His liberal spirit accepted her new-found happiness without complaint but in the depth of his heart he was dismayed, for he was a "broad" churchman with strong views on Popery. All he demanded was that she should not proselytise in her own family. Once she gave Christopher and me scapulars to wear round our necks, and these he confiscated. Beyond that she resisted the impulse to convert us, with remarkable strength of mind and honesty considering how urgent must have been the longing to bring her two youngest into the true faith. The rest were old enough to judge for themselves, and their judgment was painfully antagonistic.

Mary, talking to me of the conversion, said:

"Of course, though there are so many things in the Roman Catholic religion that strikes us as wrong, we know that Mother, being what she is, will only accept what is right and good, and there must be a great deal that is good or she would not have been converted."

Mary read with loyal attention several books on

Catholicism, but the more she read the less she liked it, and the family in general remained simply puzzled by Lily's eccentric choice. Eventually one of her children, Lucy, her best loved, followed her, but that was long after her death.

One of the pillars of Stonehouse was cousin Monty James. On him Edward constantly relied and in all decisions his counsel was of the utmost value. Not only in the school but on the estate and in the stables he was indefatigably active. His good nature was boundless; he helped us with our riding, for he was a good horseman. He taught Mary to ride and took endless pains with us both. I remember him, on an autumn afternoon, plunging along on foot beside me in a ploughed field that skirted the shrubbery while I trotted heavily on a big-bellied beast that he had imported from somewhere. The air was full of the scent of dead leaves from the shrubbery and seaweed wafted up over the cliff as we approached its edge; darkness was not far off, and a strange excitement held me while he grasped my rein and shouted instructions, his strong ugly face turned up to me. I thought, "Shall we go over the edge? Can I ever stop in time? How wonderful this is!"

And then with a swift powerful gesture, he pulled us round, and slowly in the dusk we wandered home, up the field, across the road, and along the drive to the white house with its welcoming lights. He lifted me down and strolled round to the stables with the rein slung over his arm. . . . Sometimes he took Mary for these twilight lessons. I was only a child, but Mary was grown-up. . . .

The summer half began cold and bright in 1891. There was much anxiety about Lucy, who was con-



demned to a serious operation in London. She was so delicate that it was thought hardly possible she could survive the ordeal. Her state was found to be even worse than was expected. There seemed little hope for her.

Edward was up and down by the Granville for several days, bringing the latest news of her, while Monty James took charge. Cricket began in very cold weather, and Monty lay on the grass watching it, even his huge frame feeling the need of rest. That night he had a slight cold but he was up the next day, for Edward went to London again. But by the evening there was high fever; the doctor pronounced inflammation of the lungs.

And then it was pneumonia. For two days he was in a wild delirium, fighting the nurses and doctors with terrific strength, but on May 6th all was peace. He sank gently into unconsciousness, and died.

"How true and faithful a friend I have lost. How many burdens he has taken on his young strong shoulders and borne for me! The boys picked all their flowers to make a wreath for him," wrote Edward in his diary.

The irony of fate! Lucy was getting well, but Monty the strong was dead.

This was not yet enough. Monty's sister Julia, who had come with other relations to his death-bed, was struck down with the same disease. She lay between life and death and in the midst of all the anxiety for her, who ultimately recovered, the apex of tragedy was reached.

Ten days after Monty's death one of the boys, a rare and gifted character and an only son, died sud-



THE SHINNER QUARTET

(L. to R.): *Emily Shinner, Lucy Stone, Cecilia Gates, Florence Hemmings.*



denly of acute meningitis after two days' illness. This was such a fearful tragedy that it seemed to strike at the very roots of Stonehouse. "Death seems hovering over us," wrote Lily. "I feel in a dream, expecting a blow from somewhere and dimly conscious of a great trouble—feeling in a dead way my own unfitness to die—and how little I can help others, with my wicked heart. Mary and I used to say that if a boy died here, we could not go on, but I suppose we can, and do."

They did go on and there were no more deaths. Mary, Christopher and I had been hurried away from Stonehouse a week after Monty's death, Christopher to Creeting, Mary and I to her refuge, Wantage. I entered the Community's school, St. Mary's: my fifth scholastic experience. I was there only a term, and though it was summer, spent the nights coughing in my comfortable cell. Sometimes a sister would come in quietly with a cup of milk to stop the hideous noise I was making. I must have had other treatment but that is all I remember, because it was the most comforting thing that happened. I was intensely pious at this period and spent much time at the *prie dieu* which was part of the furniture of every girl's room. The shock of Monty's death brought me to my knees, environment and puberty did the rest. I thought I was dying and felt very interesting. I made friends with a lovely girl called Phoebe, fair and tall and full of ideals. We exchanged our inmost thoughts with fervour. All was sweetness and light. We put on our little flat white caps which tied with Mary blue ribbon under our hair, and went to all the offices we were allowed to attend. My favourite was Compline. The brittle virgin voices chanted:

"Lord, I am not high-minded  
I have no proud looks. . . ."

"Keep me as the apple of an eye;  
Hide me under the shadow of thy wing."

I would murmur the lovely lines again as I turned over in bed, to cough and cough, and keep my neighbours awake.

One of the pioneer woman doctors, Mrs. Atkins, blessed be her name! ordered rest and plenty of riding at home. So that was the end of pleasant St. Mary's for me. It was much the most sympathetic of the many schools I endured.

Those summer holidays were spent in what we considered a beastly house on the road to Broadstairs, while the drains were being done at Stonehouse. The peacocks were an omen, but the drains must have been responsible for most of the troubles of that fatal year. The whole of Broadstairs was at that time in an upheaval over the drainage system. Edward was most unwillingly a member of the local Board, and the question of the town drainage was thrashed out in a series of excited meetings, at one of which, in the midst of a painful crisis, Edward was heard humming softly to himself the popular tune, "And her golden hair was hanging down her back." He had a wonderful gift of detachment and retired into a world of his own when things became dull or tiresome.

Two Stonehouse boys have commemorated Edward in prose; Desmond MacCarthy in an enchanting tale, *The Mark on the Shutter*, in which, as the Rev. Walter Crum, he is described as a fine scholar and a splendid actor, with voice and features that could "express not

only the sternest resentment but every shade of tender approval." "In goodness and refinement he was superior to people most of the boys saw at home, including their parents." Percy Lubbock in *Shades of Eton* has a portrait as delicately done as any of his work of the old man who kept life always "high and handsome." Lucy's playing to the boys one night is immortalised in this most precious record of Percy Lubbock's, and so is Edward's "superbly dramatic" reading.

Christopher was a Stonehouse boy until it, as far as we were concerned, came to an end. I had a year of peace from school, after the St. Mary's adventure. I rode, and took music seriously. Christine Keiper was my teacher; her method was elegant, and suited my too long fingers. I played duets with the boys, but never with "Dante," alas! for by this time he was at Eton. I was given two handsomely bound volumes of Beethoven's Sonatas at Christmas, and took them proudly to the next school I was sent to. This was the Francis Holland High School in Baker Street, where Margaret and Ruth had been so happy that they begged Lily to send me there. By this time I had reached the same passive resistance stage that Guy had achieved early in life. I was determined not to be a scholar. I would learn to play the piano as perfectly as possible, but I turned from the intricacies of harmony with as much repulsion as I turned from mathematics. I accepted literature as a tolerable subject, but to the rest of the curriculum I turned a deaf ear. I watched with loathing the eager girls whose excited gestures and upraised arms proclaimed that *they* knew the answer to a question. "Oh, please, Miss Smith, *I know!*" Frantic waving of hands. Goodness me, how

silly. If I did know I was too lazy to raise an arm. What on earth was the use?

This sort of attitude naturally exasperated my teachers, and Lilla B. Strong, who was Headmistress, never tired of upbraiding me. She was a swarthy masculine type, with a fine head and short black hair, dressed always in collar and tie and well-cut tailor-made. She was a good musician and conducted the choral singing with energy worthy of a better cause. She could not endure my laziness and would get me standing up at my desk while she tiraded me before them all, myself pale and determined to avoid the usual climax of one of Miss Strong's lectures, a flood of tears. It was what I thought she was deliberately aiming at, and I would not give her the satisfaction. I think now that she really was wishing I would take trouble for my own sake, but unfortunately her method only made me more stubbornly determined to be idle. Once she said:

"I really cannot understand, Faith, how you can do such bad work. You come of a very intellectual family——"

I was struck by this phrase, and in a composition a week later, wrote that some one "came of" a military family. My class mistress corrected it. "Came of," she said, was very bad English. This gave me great pleasure.

I was now learning music from Constance Bache, and had begun all over again from the beginning, because her method was totally different from Christine Keiper's. Now I had to hold my fingers straight, which was awkward and ugly. But I made great progress and my bound Beethoven was scored in several places with Miss Bache's minute fingering.

And here is where I got Miss Strong. She liked my music. Girls used to tell me how when I played at school concerts her expression was "blissful"; sometimes she would come in while I was having a lesson, and then she was gracious and kind. I was torn between love and hate for this remarkable woman, who with her fierce black eyes could fascinate and repel.

There was not much that I could endure at Baker Street, but Gloucester Place, where I lodged, was a different matter. It was a boarding-house for girls who were studying the various arts, quite independent of Baker Street but used by pupils who had homes in the country. Two devoted women friends kept it. They called each other Pets and Peach. Pets was delicate, washed out and white-haired, but Peach was worthy of her name. She was a tall slim creature, about thirty-five, with shining black hair, glittering teeth, a complexion like a ripe rosy peach, and full brown eyes. They sat at each end of the long table at meals, and slept in an enormous bed in a room at the back of the drawing-room. They ran the house admirably; the food was good. We dressed for dinner, and sat primly in the drawing-room afterwards with our sewing, while Peach read aloud with her eyes wandering over the top of her book continually. Periodically we would be taken in a body to the theatre, and for a time we went to an excessively select dancing class a few doors off.

But soon Mrs. Wordsworth appeared on the scene, and the select dancing class was abandoned for Portman Rooms, where the little old woman in black satin, with a swivel eye and an ebony cane, gathered every one who was any one around her to learn the intricacies of the latest craze, skirt-dancing. Accordion-pleated



skirts were demanded by all self-respecting girls, and mine was pale blue. Mrs. Wordsworth with her curiously unpleasant yell would call upon her best pupils to perform alone. The rest of us would stop in a great circle, while the chosen one did her steps in a smaller circle of her own. Two performers shine very brightly in my memory. One was Margaret Irby, a small exquisite child, whose movements were pure grace, and whose lack of self-consciousness was not the least of her charms, and the other, Jenny Monsell, who was in the same class as myself at Baker Street and for whom I had an admiration that I never attempted to express. She was the only thing I cared to look at during those long dreary sessions of history and geography and mathematics. She did as little work as I did. Occasionally her pretty arm would be waved with the rest of the eager crowd, but it was a gay gesture of jingling bracelets free from smugness or deediness. There was tremendous competition for the desk next to her at the beginning of the term, as she had a train of adorers to whom she was maddeningly impartial. They fought it out among themselves, Jenny remaining, I was glad to note, in a friendly state of indifference as to which of them won.

Lily came to a school entertainment and sat on the platform next to Jenny's father. She saw Jenny for the first time. Afterwards she said to me:

"Jenny Monsell should be your friend. How lovely she is! I told her father so, and he said, 'Yes. But she's even better than she looks.' She is much more than pretty, my dear."

I knew all that, and was only longing to be Jenny's best friend, but I was not going to try to penetrate the barrage of girls which perpetually encircled her. She

was really quite remote from them but was too kind to let them realise it. There is a clear vision of her waiting in the dingy Baker Street Underground Station with a small group. They matched their background admirably, but Jenny was like a bright flower in a bed of weeds. She wore the straw boater they were all wearing with the school colours, red and white stripes, but at her own angle. Her little waist was encircled by the same sort of belt as the rest, but the skirt flared trimly from it and the white muslin blouse with its lacey jabot was tucked in without a fold wrong. It was not only that her clothes were better cut than the rest or that she knew how to wear them. Nor was it that the face beneath that hard boater was the prettiest face in the school. Jenny had glamour, and it was not a false glamour.

"Fancy, what do you think?" whispered one of her most tiresome admirers to me as we were lining up for morning prayers. "Jenny's had *two* letters this morning from boys. One from Eton and the other from the *Britannia*!"

("Stop breathing in my ear, you greasy fool.")  
 "Well why not? Of course she has. Who wouldn't be in love with her? She must get them every day."

How I loathed all this girlish excitement.

After all, I was one up on most of these enthusiasts for I saw more of Jenny out of school than they did. I spent most of my Sundays at Abbey Gardens, Westminster, where my great-uncle, Wellington Furse, was first a Canon and then Archdeacon. As the Furses were cousins of the Monsells, I saw Jenny there, and I often went to tea in Gordon Square where the Monsells lived, and sometimes Bobbie the midshipman, later First Lord of the Admiralty, would walk in. I

like to remember Jenny as she was then, her gaiety and sensitive charm and the inspiration she was to every one round her to enjoy life and be a little bit frivolous, and never to be unkind. It seemed that whatever might happen to the rest of us, Jenny was blessed by the gods beyond us all. And so no doubt she was, in character and grace. After she left school and made her debut as a society girl she became a hospital nurse, and ended by marrying one of her patients.

She was the mother of Gino Watkins, the young explorer who was lost in the Antarctic.

We worshipped at the Church of the Annunciation, which had been Quebec Chapel, in Bryanston Street. We sat in the front row and though we had a good view of the choir and the proceedings at the altar (there was plenty of warmth and ritual, and a luminous cross which glowed effectively when the lights went down for the sermon), the pulpit was behind us, and however distinguished the preacher, it was almost impossible to listen to him. We had all the stars, Father Dolling, Canons Scott Holland and Gore, and a famous preacher who used to come down to Broadstairs with his choir-boys; they had the freedom of Stonehouse and its cricket field. Edward delighted in his company, but Lily could not abide him; thought him dirty and unpleasant. Years later, when I was a girl about town, I used to go and hear him preach. He was the idol of a large fashionable congregation. Just when his sermons were most richly helpful he suddenly sailed for the Antipodes, before his adoring congregation had recovered its breath from his last discourse. A great figure, with idiosyncrasies too openly indulged to be condoned in high places.

Edward Bickersteth Ottley was the incumbent of the Church of the Annunciation. He had the mystical beauty of a mediæval saint; his apparent remoteness from ordinary human weakness impressed me. Here is the man, I thought, who shall prepare me for confirmation, which was looming inevitably. Margaret and Ruth had profited greatly by the instructions of an excellent clergyman who was interested in Baker Street school, and it was taken for granted that I should follow their lead. He made no appeal to me and I insisted upon Mr. Ottley. Mr. Ottley or nobody.

It was an innovation. I was the only Baker Street girl in his class, which consisted of seven society maidens who took their instruction with cheerful indifference. Mr. Ottley sat on a slippery wooden chair much too small for his long cassocked body, slithering to its edge and pulling himself up only just in time all through the class, nervously fingering a gold pencil while he talked.

Whatever may have been waiting for me in this phase of my spiritual life, I was too lazy to go out and meet it. Mr. Ottley's instruction was admirable, and I was attentive, but I was hopelessly earth-bound. Even when the Bishop of London laid his hands on my bowed head in St. Paul's Cathedral, I was remembering how I had dropped my prayer-book (an enormous one with huge print) in the vestry after a class, so that the air was thick with the feathers from peacock's necks which I used for book-markers, and how petrified with embarrassment I had been, while Mr. Ottley smiled his charming wry smile, and rescued one or two of them, to my further embarrassment.

There were plenty of nice girls at Baker Street, but I had only one intimate friend, a dear red-haired girl

covered entirely with freckles. She shared my room at Pets and Peach's, and for a term or two we had a saintly girl called Mary for company. When our conversation shocked her she would fling herself on her knees and say her prayers. It was the only way to stop us. She was a perfect butt for tricks, and the best I remember was when Sarah got under her bed while she was out of the room for her bath after Lights Out. As soon as she was comfortably settled in bed, Sarah began gently heaving her up from below. Her agonised cries under her breath, torn between fear and the breaking of silence rules, only encouraged Sarah to heave still harder.

"What is the matter, Mary?" I asked innocently.

"Oh, oh, something dreadful—oh, what is it? Oh, dear! OH! OH! How could you, could you, Sarah!" as Sarah crept out at last, exhausted with laughter.

Poor Mary cried herself to sleep, for our sins and for her own in talking after Lights Out. When she left, to take up good works, we were alone again, and Lights Out was simply the prelude to conversation, carried on in discreet whispers and usually in one bed.

On most Saturday afternoons I was taken by one of my sisters, generally Lucy, to the Popular Concert, known as the Saturday Pop, at St. James's Hall. Lucy's headquarters were now in London at the first women bathelors' flats, the York Street Residential Chambers for Ladies; the Shinner Quartet was a flourishing concern, and toured England and the Continent. When Miss Shinner retired, the magnificent Wietrowitz took command, and, after her, Nora Clench, who was a fine leader. Lucy was always busy, with plenty of pupils too, and incidentally scarcely ever free from devastating

neuralgia. I have seen her get up as though from the dead and stagger off to play at the Æolian or Wigmore Hall, to collapse at the end of it and be bundled back into bed.

Those Saturday Pops gave us both headaches; there was never a worse ventilated place than St. James's Hall. There we listened to the Joachim Quartet with Piatti the 'cellist, who was just like a 'cello himself. I was depressed by the appearance of this famous quartet, which seemed to have few human attributes. Joachim was old and deaf and occasionally played out of tune. I did not enjoy their playing half so much as those concerts at Stonehouse, when the members of the Shinner Quartet were staying with us, and there was lovely music from morning to night which could be listened to at ease in the great schoolroom. And there were other times when Lucy, Frank and Margaret played trios, and there were delightful unaccompanied vocal quartets—Margaret with her exquisite white soprano, Ruth with her pure boy's voice, and Frank and Ned bass and tenor. Sometimes Lucy, but her voice had been trained in Paris, and had *vibrato* and a resonance which did not blend with the essentially English *timbre* of the other voices.

Though ballads were the rage in those days, no one ever heard Frederic E. Weatherley at Stonehouse. The nearest thing to a ballad was *Douglas Gordon*, and that was considered rather cheap. Sometimes visitors hopefully brought a roll of music, as was the habit then, but it always remained in the hall. The Stones were musical snobs of the first water, and would not risk untried amateur efforts. They were sufficient in themselves, and could give an entire concert of pleasing variety, ending generally with a dramatic sketch

excellently performed. Why allow second-rate amateurs to spoil the show? They were not allowed.

The Saturday Pops were unquestionably part of my education, and that may have been the basis of my discontent. The grim dusty hall with its pseudo-Oriental decoration held little hope of entertainment. But it had its brighter moments. There were the Plunket Greene-Leonard Borwick recitals, which were almost unalloyed pleasure, qualified only by the gloominess of the hall. Both artistes were delightful to watch. Borwick with his compact ease, playing his piano without any apparent effort, without any forcing of emotion, yet with a warm love of the music to which even I luxuriously responded. Plunket Greene, so handsome and distinguished!

"Hark at that," Lucy would whisper after a song. "No one can sing it like that!" Some marvel of interpretation that she could appreciate but I could not.

Borwick had some connection with the baking powder which advertised on a bright blue ground, and the posters for his concerts were always BORWICK in block letters on the same ground.

In a sunny house on Campden Hill I had the most poignant musical experience of my youth. An afternoon recital with amber light through curtains shading the June sun. On an improvised platform were the two most beautiful people I had ever seen—George Henschel and his wife. They sang duets, he at the piano, she standing radiant beside him. For this memory I am grateful, that I saw and heard them before age had touched him, or death had taken her, their art and beauty in full perfection.

My misdemeanours at school were negative. I was not rowdy, nor was I an active rebel; I simply failed

to exhibit the *esprit de corps*, now known as the team spirit, which is rightly the principal quality demanded in a first-rate school.

Was it worth while to pay through the nose for my board at Pets and Peach's in order that I should waste my time at Baker Street? I was glad when Edward and Lily decided that it was not. An attempt was made to chasten me at a college run by a sisterhood in London for teachers. I had not the slightest intention of teaching, but my visits to the church schools, which were part of the training, gave me a unique chance of studying the London accents and intonation, of which I took full advantage. Cockney was in fact the only special subject in which I became proficient. It was not all teaching at that college. On Sundays we helped at the Men's Teas, which I enjoyed more than anything else. The great room would be crowded with men of all ages, mostly from Dockland. They sat tightly packed on forms and we went round with watering-cans full of tea which we poured into the mugs they held out. Plenty of buns and lots of hymns, which they sang with gusto, especially:

“Are you coming home to-night?  
Are you coming home to-night?  
To your loving Heavenly Father  
Are you coming home to-night?”

Once I poured a quantity of what must have been scalding tea over the knees of one of the men, who smilingly helped me to mop it up from his trousers and the floor with the most gallant goodwill possible. His perfect manners put my clumsiness to shame. I loved those Men's Teas.



By the time I had finished this ridiculous but quite amusing phase of my life, there was a family bonfire burning at Stonehouse. It burned for three days and the rubbish of eleven years was deposited by each member with a sigh of regret and a prayer for the future.

For Stonehouse was sold, lock, stock and barrel; on August 13, 1896, Edward wrote:

There was a scene of desolation, of dismantlement. Busy we all were, and troubled about many things, but the last day in the old house was not haunted by vain regrets. There was much to leave behind, much to look forward to.

Edward and Lily embarked on the new life eagerly. The scale of living would shrink to the dimensions that Lily at any rate welcomed. Edward had not made a fortune. Money had poured through his fingers; it was there to be spent, and on his family. In those eleven years of prosperity he had grudged nothing that could benefit his children. And on Lily's health he had spent a small fortune. There had been winters in Bordighera for Mary and Lucy when Lucy's health required it, and actually an adopted baby for Lily, as though ten of her own had not been enough. A Catholic baby, of course, whose mother had died in childbirth and whose father had retired to an asylum on being left with ten children on his hands. They were mostly adopted, and Nelly came to us when seven weeks old. I remember looking over the balcony to see an open cab drive up to the front door with two women and a white bundle.

"Who are these, my dear?" asked Edward.

"It's the baby, Edward dear," said Lily sweetly but firmly.

The faintest shadow passed over his face but only for a moment. When he saw the look in Lily's eyes, as she held the baby in her arms after the women had gone, he must have realised what this would mean to her. She had conquered her heart-breaking illness, and here she was with all the wealth of her emotional nature free to spend on her children. But we were all growing up and no longer dependent on her. We had, alas, learned to do without her in her long absence, and her conversion had complicated our relationship. However much she longed for intimacy, there was always that between us, right to the end.

Her final healing came through this baby, whose helplessness was her strength. She was better than a grandchild, with no jealous mother looking on. Lily had a little door made between her bedroom and our old nursery, and bathed and dressed Nelly, who was soon the darling of the household, an amusing child with pretty ways. When we left Stonehouse she was three years old.

Hillingdon was our next home. The seventeenth-century house we lived in is about all there is left of the charming village which so attracted Edward and Lily. Only it, the church, and the Red Lion remain in the village square. Sometimes I look into our narrow garden as I pass by now, and remember Edward busy with his weeding, Margaret crashing across the lawn into the bushes on her first bicycle with characteristic impetuosity; Lily sitting there with Nelly at her knee, her silver hair glinting in the sunshine, her bright eyes under their shapely brows darkly observing the occupations of her family. Edward's tricycle is

being cleaned by Christopher, almost entirely a labour of love but not quite, for it brings him some pocket-money. Christopher is at school at Summer Fields now, being coached for a scholarship at Eton.

The tricycle is the symbol of Edward's emancipation. Soon he will be going all over the country on it, regardless of his increasing deafness and indifferent to a tumble or two and the loss of spectacles in ditches. Frank has unwillingly abandoned his high bicycle and has the latest thing in safeties. The rest of the family follow suit. No more horses for Faith, but a Singer bicycle. Frank dreams of something more exciting and will soon have one of the first motor-cars, and be the terror of the countryside.

Will has discovered Wagner at Cambridge, and is picking out the Holy Grail music from *Parsifal* in the drawing-room. He has been on a tour in Scandinavia with Monty James, Warden of King's, and another undergraduate called MacBride. Will always goes back to Cambridge in the Christmas vacation to act in Monty James's pantomime. He plays the heroine and sings such touching ballads as "Some Day" in a terrific soprano. Edward's histrionic gifts have been passed on and Will is a delicious comedian and mimic, and one of the lights of the A.D.C.

Faith sits smoking a cigarette and studying a part. She began smoking at sixteen, and Edward hands her the cigarettes after dinner without twitching an eyelid. It was not done in those days, but Edward doesn't see why it shouldn't be. Faith is going to act in a play called *The Passport* by B. C. Stephenson, who wrote the popular *Dorothy*. He lives near by at Uxbridge, and will produce the play with his daughter Poppy, a clever amateur, in the principal part. Faith is to play



EDWARD AND CHRISTOPHER STONE AT  
HILLINGDON COTTAGE



a good maid's part. She has got over most of her shyness and has begun singing at family concerts, rather frivolous songs like "Louisiana Lou" and Letty Lind's "Monkey on a Stick." Not up to the Stone standard, but sometimes encored. Lily looks long at Faith. She is showing a stage-struck tendency which is disconcerting. Pictures of actresses line her den up in the attic. Ellaline Terriss the favourite; Cissie Loftus; May Yohe; Letty Lind; Marie Tempest; all the lighter side of the stage, and no actors at all, not even Wilson Barrett, who was the idol of the moment. A pity that the Stephensons encourage her to think she can act.

I had changed piano method again at sixteen. Clare Fry had been one of Clara Schumann's last pupils, and it was only because she was a wonderful teacher and artiste that I could endure being taken right back to the beginning again. Tears bathed the keys on that first morning when she broke it to me that if I was to learn with her I must change my method, which was all wrong—all wrong.

I learnt more from her in a few months than I had learnt in all those years. Again there was sunshine and music on Campden Hill, for she lived in Bedford Gardens, and it was always exciting to clang that iron gate and run up the little garden with my music under my arm and to know that I was going to *enjoy* my lesson as I did at Stonehouse with Christine Keiper. Later on I learnt singing with delightful Mrs. Hayden Coffin, who also lived in Bedford Gardens, so all my memories of Campden Hill are peculiarly happy.

Clare Fry suggested that I should be a professional pianist. Lily thought this a good solution of the

problem of my future. I foresaw only too clearly years of hard work, with but a moderate success at the end of it, and firmly turned it down. I was too nervous for a soloist and to be a professional accompanist involved such horrors as transposition.

"You must do something, you know," said Lily. "No one must be idle."

"I suppose not," I replied doubtfully, very doubtfully. "Anyway, I can work at my singing, and then we'll see what will happen."

Lily knew what was in my mind and the threat contained in my last remark, but chose to ignore it.

"Whatever you do you will have to work. Understand that. Even on the stage. You can't just walk on to it, you know. But I hope you will never want to."

"I want to see some life, Mother darling."

She winced at that and her eyes clouded.

"I never saw life. I married too young and had too many babies."

"I shall never marry," I declared.

"I shan't blame you, my dear, if you don't." She laughed a little bitterly. "There's Father coming by the church. He's riding much too fast and seems to have lost his spectacles again. Run and meet him and tell him we're having tea in the garden."

She stood at the window watching him.

"I wish I'd known Father when he was a young man," I cried impulsively.

"He was never such a darling as he is now, believe me," was her reply. A glance at her intense face assured me that she loved him now, whatever bitterness there may have been in the past.

There he was, dashing past the window, his wide-

awake crammed down over the silky curls which he was always having cut when he shouldn't. His dome-shaped head was bald but the silver fringe at the back was the pride of his female relations.

"Had my hair cut. Some protest," is an entry in his diary.

He sometimes wore a secular black tie now instead of the white schoolmaster's bow. As he never got beyond deacon's orders, because of some difficulty with the Thirty-nine Articles, he was spared the dog-collar. At Stonehouse he was sometimes caught by parents in what he considered unconventional attire.

"I had to receive them, as they came unexpectedly, in my flannels," was at least twice a shocked entry. Now he could wear flannels at any time of the day, and he could say "I'm going to Eton" whenever he liked, and be there in less than an hour on his tricycle. Ned was a flourishing younger master, with a famous house in prospect. And then there would be Christopher. . . .

His Summer Fields reports were encouraging.

"A charming boy to teach. A vigorous mind. My only fear is that he will be over-anxious. He is good at every subject except French. My hopes for Eton are rising!" came from Dr. Williams.

Those hopes were justified. Christopher headed the list in July, 1896. Telegrams of congratulation poured into Hillingdon Cottage.

"Christopher for the moment," wrote Will, "is the first scholar in England!"

"It was a fine performance," said Dr. Williams, "brought about by dash rather than very correct work, I fancy. The lad is full of vigour and promise. Please God, he may live to prove it. He was quite 'bowled



over' by the news and excitement of it, but yesterday was perfectly right again and bowled seven wickets."

What filled Edward with wonder was the fact that the dreaded subject Mathematics seemed to have turned the scale. He had tackled the problems pluckily. While he was cramming for the scholarship, he wrote to Edward:

I'm afraid I'm getting a beastly saint (!) which I don't want to be. I have got into the habit of sapping whenever I have got any spare time, while every one else is playing or ragging, which of course is objectionable to them. But perhaps after the summer I shall become myself again. I'm sure you can't want our son to be a beastly bookworm *always*. It's all right now, of course. . . .

When we had been at Hillingdon for about two years it was realised that even that little place was too much to keep up with our reduced income. Besides, Lily was tired of driving in a "fly" to West Drayton every Sunday for Mass at the dull little Catholic church.<sup>1</sup> I was going up to town three times a week for my singing and piano lessons, and it was too much for me. Obviously we must go to London. Edward detested the idea but cheerfully went flat-hunting. He must have light and air and trees, so he investigated the new flats at Battersea looking out on the Park, but facing north. We moved into Park Mansions in August, 1898, having let Hillingdon Cottage to Mr. Wells and Miss Sheppard, sister of "Dick" Sheppard, who were newly married.

<sup>1</sup>A new church has since been built.

Thirty-three Park Mansions had more sun than most of the flats for it was at the western end and got the full afternoon sun in all the rooms but one. This was hardly an advantage as it turned out, for we moved in a heat wave and I can still smell the dusty sunshine that poured into the open windows. Edward had his tricycle and went bravely about in the traffic, trundling along as often as possible to Eton, for he did not love Battersea.

But what he did love was his freedom, and retirement was to him a second blooming. Or was it that now for the first time his spirit fully expanded, released from tutelary bondage? There was no relaxing of intellectual interests; his mind would always flow serenely through a classic landscape and one of his amusements in retirement was the monotony with which he won the weekly prizes for Latin verse in the *Westminster Gazette*.

But he was merry, enjoying the simple things of life with the ardour of a boy; noisy, singing and banging doors with a gay indifference to the sensitive nerves of his daughters. Deaf, very deaf, but utterly free from the suspicions that haunt the deaf, never insistent on repetition of general conversation, but cupping his ear gladly to hear any scraps that fell his way.

The flat was more a picnic than a home. It was not a bad little place and better built than most modern mansions. But the glory of Stonehouse and the dignified comfort of Hillingdon were remembered with regret sometimes. However, there were new delights. There was the theatre, especially the Court in Sloane Square, which was easy to reach, and where Miss Compton, who was then my favourite actress, was

playing in amusing comedies specially written for her by her husband, R. C. Carton. There was no little bird to whisper as I sat in the pit that one day she would be my aunt-in-law. No one played "county" better than she, and her bland composure in all sorts of situations has never been equalled so far as I know. Her technique was very similar to Charles Hawtrey's, so smooth as to be hardly noticeable. We stood for hours for the front row of the pit in those days.

An amusement that Edward and Lily shared with us was Earl's Court Exhibition. They would stroll in and listen to the bands while we went on the water-chute and the Great Wheel, which last was a very tedious business. Edward would take little Nelly to the Zoo, and Lily spent a great deal of time in the humble Battersea church she liked so much better than Farm Street. She was really happy at the flat, cooking, at which she excelled, and doing all sorts of unwonted housework, for we only had a lady called Mrs. Gallop to work for us and occasionally her daughter Daisy. Once we came home from somewhere to find a note from Daisy :

*Maddam a lidy as bing ere. . . .*

Here the springs of her invention dried up; that was the end of her note, and we never found out who the lady was.

It was terribly hot all through August. Christopher and I went to stay with the Furses at Halsdon in Devon, and there I had the last real riding I was to have in my life. The rest of the family retired to a little house at Churt called the Chimney Corner, but Lily remained most of the time in London busy with household things, getting the flat in order for our return and spending her leisure time in church.

All through that heat wave she worked, wearing herself out, but delighting in her new activity and the freedom from the burden of running a house. No one in the kitchen but Mrs. Gallop, and she was no trouble at all!

The heat wave went on right into September. There was not a breath of air in the flat. When we came back we spent most of the time on the little north balcony that looked on the Park, and watched the bicyclists who crowded into it as soon as the sun began to go down. The Battersea bicycling craze had, I think, abated by this time, but there were still plenty of smart turnouts to be seen. It was too hot to go to the theatre, and Earl's Court was our only relaxation in the evenings.

The 17th of September was the hottest day, and after that there was rain and the air cooled. Edward rode off on the 27th to visit Hillingdon, in perfect weather, and enjoyed the ride through Acton, Ealing, Southall and Hayes to Hillingdon. There were no tramlines on the Uxbridge Road in those days, nor any *His Master's Voice* at Hayes, which was a little country village. He came back in good spirits the same evening and found us returned from Earl's Court, where we had taken Nelly for a treat.

"Where is Mother?"

"Lying down in Lucy's room. She left supper keeping warm in the kitchen, but we ate it without her. Faith has been playing the piano to wake her. She must have been very tired. . . ."

Edward went in to look at her, and came back pale and distraught.

"My dears, I don't like it. She is ill. I must go for a doctor."

Her breathing was heavy now. We knew at once that we were losing her; already she had passed from us, and nothing could disturb her long last sleep. She had lain down to rest, tired out after seeing that everything was ready for us, and she died as she slept.

Her short spell of happiness and well-being on earth was over, and she died at the age of fifty-seven on the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, 1898.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHARLES HAWTREY AND OTHERS

WE left Battersea soon after Lily's death, but it was not only the desolation of the flat without her that drove us away. The chief reasons for it had gone, Lily's church and my lessons. Edward was not happy in London, nor was the flat a good centre for the family, which was now scattered on its various avocations. Mary was a full-fledged sister at Wantage, Lucy constantly away touring with the Quartet, Margaret nursing or slumming, and Ruth doing private teaching.

My future was settled. My strange ambition for the stage was viewed with mingled feelings by the rest of the family. There was no very active opposition. It was, however, regarded as a wild and irresponsible notion, and only Lucy was warmly sympathetic about it from the first moment. Edward, fussed and troubled by warnings from all quarters, hummed gently to himself and thought it over.

Faith was evidently incapable of following her sisters' lead and had no sort of aptitude for teaching or social work. Why then should she attempt it? Better she should follow her own bent, as she had so definitely found one. After all, it was from himself that she had inherited her tastes, and why should she not try her hand? It was an unheard of thing, of course, but there was adventure in it, such as he and Lily might have loved. Adventure! There had been Stonehouse, that great adventure, but both could have

happily encountered more, much more than life had allowed them. . . . He hummed and pondered; then wrote a letter to his old friend John Hawtrey.

The result of this letter was that one day in summer the old man and I were ushered into the presence of Charles Hawtrey at 60 Haymarket. Edward, cupping his ear, sat in the guest's chair of honour, while I, in my best clothes and as much made-up as I dared, sat opposite Hawtrey at his desk.

A lively conversation followed at the end of which Hawtrey said:

"You shall walk on in my next show which opens in the autumn. Rehearsals begin in August. I'll pay you two guineas a week."

I floated out of the office followed by Edward.

"Well, my dear, was anything settled?"

I told him.

"Good gracious, why didn't you tell me? I had no idea—I should have liked to thank him. How kind! I am such a deaf old fool. I don't hear things. Dear, dear, I must write to him."

How lovely was Edward's faith in human nature! If his daughter must go on the stage, who could more appropriately take charge of her than the son of his old friend, a gentleman (such a rarity, he understood, in that profession), and one of whom he had heard nothing but good?

He knew that Charles Hawtrey had made a fortune with his play, *The Private Secretary*, and he knew also what everybody did not know, that a good deal of that fortune had been handed over to his father for the benefit of the school at Westgate. Charles was the most generous creature on earth, and his reputation as an actor, of course, was high. But Edward knew

nothing of his reputation as a man about town. He remembered him as a boy, rather a horsy youth, but born and bred in the shadow of Eton. That was enough.

For the rest of the summer I studied at Ben Greet's school in Bedford Street. Edward had built a couple of cottages in the Briary grounds at Eton, and was going to live in one of them with Ruth, so a home in London had to be found for me.

By the time rehearsals at the Avenue (now the Playhouse) began, I was established in Mrs. Erskine's flat at Bickenhall Mansions. She had two daughters studying for the stage, Ruth and Gladys. Ruth was a strikingly handsome girl with fair corkscrew curls, who made her name later as Ruth Maitland. Gladys had dark corkscrews and a charming voice. They were an interesting pair and took their work seriously. So did their mother. They were as carefully launched as a pair of cruisers. Even I was able to appreciate the parental vigilance. The atmosphere was theatrical with a solid background of piety. There were two other guests in the flat. One of them was Mabel Beardsley, sister of Aubrey. The other, whose name I forget, was a large exciting person who told her own cards every day, also, with great good nature, every one else's. Her room was heavy with scent, and much marabou lay around on chairs and bed, attached to boudoir gowns of surprising richness. Her dressing-table was less like a battlefield than a jousting ground, with every pot and implement gaily accoutred for the combat.

Mabel's pale countenance and untidy red hair fascinated me. She swept about gracefully in clinging garments, still wearing black for Aubrey; scarcely of this earth, she seemed.



Once Gladys ventured to tell her of an enormous smudge of eye-black on her cheek, which spoilt an otherwise faultless make-up. Saki was coming to see her, and Gladys knew she would want to look her best.

Mabel simply gazed into space.

"Thanks, dear. *I know.*"

Gladys was crushed.

Mabel braved it for some minutes, and a lucky diversion gave her the opportunity to slip quietly to her room, so that when Saki arrived he found her unblemished.

I was in bed with influenza, and she glided in to see me, an angel of sweetness.

"Dear child, you must be bored. Are you well enough to read? I have brought you Aubrey's last book. Only pictures, so they won't tire you."

She laid a handsome volume by my bed before she left me, and I took it up reverently. I gazed with growing astonishment at a riot of fauns and satyrs reclining, sedentary or processing, in every stage of erotic exaltation. The magnificence of the drawing enthralled me and the fever in my veins brought the scenes to more than life. For the rest of the night I was sweating with terror, for the room was full of black and white devils with Aubrey's face (which I had often studied in Mabel's room) and horns and cloven hooves. They leapt over the chairs, up on to the wardrobe, and even sat, obscenely posturing, on the end of the bed.

It was not the best moment for an introduction to the more exclusive creations of Beardsley, but there was no malice in Mabel's gesture, for Aubrey's work was to her sacred and familiar. She could scarcely be expected to fathom its effect upon an impressionable girl with little experience and a good deal of fever.

The play at the Avenue was *A Message from Mars*, the success of Hawtreys's lifetime. The transformation of a selfish monster into a beaming altruist was the theme, and J. N. Maskelyne was called in for "effects." After the hero's disenchanted fiancée and aunt have gone off to a ball without him, because he prefers to stay at home and study the fascinating theory of life on Mars, the Messenger from that planet appears with magical abruptness, and every attempt at self-assertion by "Horace" the hero is met by a sharp electric shock, while the furniture and pictures do a lively dance. So he has to give in, and goes out into the snow to see life as lived by the poor. Always accompanied by the Messenger, he distributes sovereigns and ten-pound notes under compulsion until he has nothing left. Then he finds himself outside the house where Minnie his fiancée is dancing. The road is up and the snow is thick. A watchman's sentry-box is on the left. As Horace stands in front of it, the Messenger, with a superb gesture, cries:

"Stand forth, poor shivering wretch, a beggar, and in rags!"

Hawtreys's greatcoat with astrakhan collar and his evening trousers disappear in a flash, and he stands there—in rags. Underneath the sentry-box Hawtreys's dresser has taken hold of two pieces of catgut in the overcoat, and at his cue has given one tug and the entire fake costume falls to bits and is engulfed in the sentry-box. Every night it has to be carefully sewn in every seam with catgut by Millie, who is our dresser.

"A shocking business," is all Millie's comment on this work. But as it's for the Guv'nor she does it with ardour.

The play, written by Robert Ganthony, supple-

mented by ideas from the three Hawtrey brothers, George, John and Charles himself, had every possible box-office asset, drama, comedy, human appeal and a good thumping moral, yet as far as I know it has never been revived nor has a film been made of it.

The Second Act was my only concern. I walked on in a crowd that collected round a street accident, when Hawtrey had to give a ten-pound note, with a very bad grace, to the wife of the victim. I understudied a nice little part, the Flower Girl, to whom Hawtrey gives his last sovereign. I was originally called A Woman of the Streets, but in deference to the actress the name was changed, and a bunch of violets put into her hand. Myra, who played the part, was very delicate and constantly off, so that quite early in the run I "got my chance." She was a tall lovely creature, like a drooping gladiolus, utterly free from pettiness or malice, which made her a vivid contrast to some of her neighbours in the dressing-room. She was taken out as much as they were, but her manner of going was totally unlike theirs. There was no fuss or excitement or chatter about men, unless it were a good story she had heard and told remarkably well. She would prepare for her supper-party with serene detachment, first tightening her stays to bring up her bust for the low dress—she had a warm marble bosom with a tracery of faint blue veins, which might have thrilled Pheidias—When she was dressed, with flowers sprayed on her shoulder and a diamond star in her hair she would blow a vague kiss and vanish from the dressing-room, up to the stage door, where her admirer of the moment would be waiting with a smart hansom.

Her little presents to me when I played her part were amusing and unusual. Once it was an eccentric

canary which sang exquisitely and laid blue eggs every now and then. I sometimes visited her flat in Long Acre. She was significant in being my first taste of the so-called Bohemian life, and it was a very pleasant taste. For she was a truly decent and lovable young woman and I was flattered by her kindness. She was quite without ambition, and that has always been to me an appealing deficiency. At the other end of the Bohemian scale were her neighbours in our dressing-room, the young ladies who walked on in the ballroom scene behind a gauze. The most noticeable were Clothilde, a dark hard-faced woman with a handsome figure splendidly clothed, and Peggy, a foolish baby-faced child, a clergyman's daughter, who began her career as I did in the *Message*. A simple little thing, badly dressed, and with no idea of making the best of herself. Clothilde took her up at once, and in less than six weeks she was firmly established in the gay life. Never was swifter descent to Avernus. She and Clothilde would come dashing in five minutes before they were due to go on. The whole dressing-room would be in a turmoil.

"Good god! We're off this time. Come on, Millie, undo my dress. Or shall I go on in it?"

"You'll get the sack if you do," came quietly from my end of the room, Lydia Rachel's voice. She called them the "ballroom bitches."

"Cautions, you are," was all Millie the dresser said, as she put them right in time for their entrance.

These girls ended tragically. Clothilde some years later, after several unsuccessful attempts, gassed herself in her bedroom; Peggy at about the same time died as the result of a long terrible illness.

Next to me in the "accident" corner of the room

was Lydia Rachel, a small woman with bright eyes and a comic spirit. She wore appalling rags and her two or three lines brought down the house at every performance. She was a genuine pro, and her friendship was of enormous value to me; what she didn't know about stage ways was certainly not worth knowing. For a girl of my bringing up to "go on the stage" is to enter a world with a totally different set of values. You've got to get to the bottom of these before you can be comfortable in it, and Rachel's outspoken criticism and advice started me off pretty well.

"Well, ducks, that's what I think about it. Take it or leave it. Lend us your blue pencil, there's a dear."

Millie's chair was in the corner next to me, but she seldom had time to sit on it. She dressed eight of us in that stuffy underground room, which as far as I remember, had no ventilation whatever. All the dressing-rooms, including Hawtrey's, were underground at the Avenue. They opened on to a wide passage with sofas which served as a green room. Here I would sit and talk to the young man I liked best in the company, Henry Stephenson, whom I often see now on the films. He understudied the Messenger, magnificently played by Titheradge. This delightful man once pinched my cheek and said:

"You're the dead spit of my little daughter."

That little daughter was Madge, much younger than I, of course.

Why did I go on the stage? I hadn't the slightest desire to be a famous actress, and knew I never could be one. I wanted to get about, to see some life and to travel, and I saw little prospect of achieving this in the ordinary course of events. It was a dishonest motive and hard on the stage, but many a dreary

afternoon Lily and I had spent at Hillingdon, driving round in a hired carriage paying calls.

"You must get into the way of this kind of thing," Lily would say with a sigh. Why must I? It was such utter waste of time to go leaving cards on people we didn't want to see, and who didn't want to see us.

"Let's hope they'll all be out," Lily would say before we started. What an idiotic business! I made a vow that all my life I would never call on people unless we wanted to see each other, that I would run away from convention, that I would never have a wedding with rice or go to formal dinner-parties. I told Lily all this while we were driving home exhausted from a round of only too successful visits. That is, the two first victims had been at home, so that the rest of the programme had to be postponed for another day.

"You're quite right, my dear. But it may be your duty."

It shall not be my duty, I decided.

The stage was an escape, not from home, which I loved, but from the life which seemed inevitable. I had "come out" in white organdie at one of the Furses' dances at Abbey Gardens, and I had had plenty of dancing since I was fifteen, at mixed parties round Broadstairs when I had had real men as partners, not callow boys. At Hillingdon there were rounds of gaiety, lots of dances, and there was May Week at Cambridge when Will was up. Christopher and I waltzed well together. All that was not bad, but where would it lead? I felt sure my fate could not be a rectory, because no clergyman in his senses would want to marry me, but the prospect was discouraging. I must have some profession, because I must be in-

dependent and because Lily would never tolerate idleness. So there it was. . . . By a turn of the wheel I was pitched into amateur theatricals, thence on to the stage.

My stay at Bickenhall Mansions was cut short for financial reasons. When we signed our contracts for the *Message* my salary turned out to be a guinea a week.

"But Mr. Hawtrey said two guineas," I protested.

"Mr. Hawtrey must have been dreaming," said Frank Curzon.

One could not argue with Frank Curzon, so a guinea it was. Now that I could contribute so little to my keep I could not comfortably stay on at comfortable Bickenhall Mansions. I moved to rooms in a little old house in Beaufort Street, Chelsea, which had a front garden with an iron gate, and my bedroom looked out on lilac and laburnum. Opposite was Sir Thomas More's garden, still with plenty of trees behind a high wall. Now I can go calmly down the hideous street that it has become, but the first sight of the common little flats that have taken the place of those charming old Victorian houses was a shock. More's Garden Mansions were early luxury flats, and I watched them go up with resentment. Mrs. MacCarthy, Desmond's mother, had suggested Beaufort Street for me, for she knew the landlady to be honest if eccentric. I was not yet allowed to live alone, and Cousin Bessie, Lily's cousin, who had spent most of her life visiting relations, was engaged to look after me. This consisted of sitting at home waiting for me to come in. She was so short-sighted as to be almost blind, but did complicated knitting as a spider spins its web, by the light of God, for she never looked at it.

Because it seemed inevitable and part of herself, I could bear to see her do it without irritation. My knitting phobia was all that remained of a childhood's ailment of nerves, which made points of furniture "run into" my eyes, especially when I had to sit quiet in church or at school. A twitch that became worse when I was tired, was the only outward symptom of this affliction which I found hard to explain to any one. I had grown out of most of my weaknesses, but was never well throughout the run of the *Message*. Splitting headaches, boils, a poisoned foot which went black, testified to debility and poverty of blood. Yet I was happy and far from disillusioned by stage life, delighted in my new exciting friends, and the constant visits of Will and Christopher to Beaufort Street. Home ties were not broken, but life was utterly different, which was what I had aimed at. Will was now a master at Marlborough, Christopher still at Eton.

Now Will, though he was not a dancer, decided to give a dance at Marlborough. As the time for this thrilling occasion approached, Myra fell ill, and I went on for the first time as the Flower Girl. It was a tiny but effective part. I wore a ragged black dress and a black shawl round my head, and had to beg from Hawtreys who unwillingly gave me a sovereign. I was then seized by a policeman, but Hawtreys under the compulsion of the Messenger said, "It's all right constable, I spoke to her first." Rachel helped me with my make-up, which was pale and interesting. I asked Henry Stephenson how it looked.

"Very good. Only the eyebrows are a bit too heavy."

"Damn it all, they're the only thing I haven't touched."



I inherited Lily's dark eyebrows, but mine were not as delicately arched as hers.

Because I was playing this part, I hesitated to ask Hawtrey for leave to go to Will's dance. But Will wrote, "You must."

I gathered my courage and went to see Charles.

"Please may I go to my brother's dance at Marlborough?"

He put both hands on my shoulders and his large brown eyes twinkled into mine.

"Are you going to enjoy yourself very much?"

"I hope so."

"Then you may go. I shan't let you go if you don't promise to enjoy yourself."

"I promise." We laughed a little. Then he said:

"I am pleased with you in your part. You play it very well. You are a good little girl. A dear little girl." He pushed me gently out of his room and forgot all about me. I don't think I had ever felt so happy as I felt that night.

I went down to Marlborough with my usual "beastly head." How often in my school days on Fourths of June at Eton, while others ate chicken and trifle and sat in the sunny playing fields watching or not watching the match, and saw the wet-bobs in their fascinating flowery hats, have I lain prostrate on a bed in Ned's house, deprived of all the pleasures of life, with a throbbing brow and a sick stomach; sheer excitement.

For the fireworks I was usually sufficiently recovered, and the scene of Fellows' Eyot has not changed. There you see the ruling classes divided against themselves. Rugs are taken to sit on, right down to the water's edge. The formation of the bank

is such that it is quite impossible for any one not in the front rows to see the sight of the evening—the boats floating down the stream with the crews standing or attempting to stand in salute, silhouetted against the flares and fireworks on the opposite bank.

As rugs are brought, it is perfectly easy for the front rows to sit down. But will they?

"SIT DOWN!" shout the ruling classes from the back, with that in their voices which must be obeyed.

The ruling classes in front continue to stand, cheerfully oblivious of the imperious commands from the back, which punctuate but do not interrupt the tuneful babble of well-bred voices in front.

*"SIT DOWN!!!"*

No one ever sits down.

We stayed with Will's greatest friends, the Leafs, at Marlborough. Will came in to dinner; champagne and the sight of him drove my headache away. Why did Will give a dance when he hated dancing? It was a charming idea of his, and caused a pleasant stir at Marlborough. He was usually not given to sociability, but on this occasion he enjoyed being a host. Tall and slim, his delicate face flushed, he wandered among his guests, seeing that partners and supper were plentiful, but not dancing himself.

There was no teasing of Faith to-night, and only next morning when he saw me off at the station and found one of the younger masters, who had danced with me a good part of the evening, prepared to travel up with me, did the quizzical look I knew so well flash from his blue eyes.

All he said was:

"Well, you'll be all right, then."

So I was. A pleasant young man who gave me lunches and chocolates for a week, but whom I never saw again.

Soon after I came back to the theatre we were ordered to Sandringham by the Prince of Wales. The delirium caused by this royal command quickly abated. Queen Victoria was ill, and the order was cancelled. She died, and we had a week's holiday.

Wearing deep mourning like every one else I was walking with Ethel, a girl friend, down Bond Street a few days after the death, when two smartly dressed men approached us, and one of them raising his hat from his glossy head gave Ethel a smacking kiss on the cheek.

This was in full daylight, and the whole of Bond Street seemed to stop still and gasp. Bowing, he passed on with a murmured apology in cultured accents, and Ethel was left speechless on the pavement, her face as red as a poppy. She was a modest girl, not pretty, and her public behaviour was always impeccable. Besides she was quietly though smartly dressed in black. If I felt slighted at his choice I tried not to show it, and consoled myself with the assurance that he had done it for a bet.

Whenever Christopher had leave he used to come up and go to matinées with me. He enjoyed having an actress sister who could get into the stalls for nothing, and he wrote an ironical poem to "Madam" ending:

"The glamour of Nature will fail to surpass  
This wonderful thing in A Message from Mars."

The poem was published in a little volume of verse

*Lusus Pueriles*, by Eyre and Spottiswood in 1901, the year he went up to Oxford. On one of his visits to me he mentioned casually that he had got a scholarship at Christ Church, but this was not nearly so important as the question of whether I could get him a seat for *The Messenger Boy* at the Gaiety.

My favourite place of amusement in those days was the Little Queen's Hall. Here Albert Chevalier was to be found giving one man shows from his protean repertoire. I adored that great artist. His brother and manager, Mr. Knight, used to shower tickets upon me. I sat and worshipped, several afternoons a week, and knew most of his turns by heart. His versatility was amazing. There were always coster turns, but there were also his curate in *Our Bazaar*, *M. Armand Thibaut*, a lovely sketch of an old musician, *A Fallen Star*, the tragic actor, a burlesque French song, *The Poet*, and a dozen other character sketches, each a perfect gem of sensitive art. My passion for "Chivvy" was well known in the theatre, and dear old Arthur Williams who played the Tramp and was a friend of his offered to introduce me to him. But I didn't want that. I wanted simply to gaze across the footlights, to send him violets, and to think that his brother told him when I was in front, and that he sometimes caught my eye as he took a call.

"That little girl's here again!"

I was often alone, but Christopher sometimes went with me and once I invited Edward. He arrived there before me, and Mr. Knight, who knew he was coming, spoke to him.

"Are you Mr. Reynolds?" he said.

That was the name I had taken for the stage.

"I thought it no harm to say that I was," said

Edward to me afterwards. He was carrying a box of Buszard chocolates for me, and we sat in the front row, so that he could hear something. He shook hands with Mr. Knight afterwards and thanked him for "a most enjoyable afternoon." I was glad to have my opinion of Chivvy endorsed by him.

"Aye, aye, my dear. You are right. It is the real thing. Genius, I strongly suspect."

No one knew that I wandered in the neighbourhood of Westbourne Grove, to gaze up at the house I thought was Chevalier's, but which I found out afterwards wasn't. . . .

It was in December that Will gave his dance. Two months later we were all at Marlborough again. Pneumonia had developed from what was thought to be a mild attack of influenza. On my birthday, the 26th of February, I was called at half-past four in the morning, and walked with a friend from Chelsea to Paddington Station to catch the milk train to Marlborough. Here the whole family gathered, and Will lay unconscious, his breathing an agony to watch, the great window of his bedroom wide open to the piercing winter air.

While we sat round, longing for one word or look of recognition, the doctor came in and leaned over him.

"How are you, Stone?" he said. There was something in his voice that brought Will to faint consciousness.

"Bad."

"Any pain?"

"Everywhere. . . . Everywhere." And then he relapsed again.

Why could not we who loved him bring him back for a moment? He never spoke again, but lingered on through the day, rallying in the evening, so that we were sent to bed with a faint hope, which had faded by morning. His heart had failed.

Some of us sat in his study after he died, and I, opening a drawer of his desk, found poems he had prepared for his boys to construe into Latin. The themes were all death. Christina Rossetti's "When I am dead, my dearest" was one. The others were Cowper's.

"Suns that set and moons that wane  
Rise and are returned again. . . ."

and Hood's, "We watched her breathing through the night."

Was it just coincidence, I wonder?

There could be no better epitaph for Will than two poems of Christopher's, which are in *Lusus Pueriles*:

In Memoriam W.J.S.

Up on the hill the wind blows strong,  
Up on the hill.  
Ah me! and we must wait so long  
To join you, Will.  
There you stand, face toward the breeze,  
Supremely blest;  
The cool air soothes, and you have ease,  
And rest, soft rest.  
There is the fresh untroubled sky;  
Ah, drink your fill;  
And we must wait and think and sigh  
For you, dear Will.

## An Epitaph

Simply I lived and simply fell asleep—  
But if you see the surface of the deep  
Rippled and bright with pure simplicity  
Look down into the depths and think of me.

When I was summoned to the offices in the Haymarket half-way through the run of the *Message*, the rumour that Hawtrey was going to America had become a certainty, and I knew it could only mean the sack or New York. It was New York. The Flower Girl at six pounds a week. No nonsense this time. I was given a contract to take away and study. My adoration for the Guv'nor, shared by every one, I believe, in the company, now reached fever heat. He was in truth utterly adorable in his thoughtfulness and affection for the people he had round him. When I had come back from Will's death, completely knocked out by the shock and misery of his loss, Hawtrey had sent for me to his dressing-room, and the few words he spoke, a little awkwardly, with that becoming shyness in the face of emotion so characteristic of him, warmed my stricken heart more truly than the most eloquent expressions of sympathy could have done.

He was damned fatherly, that was the worst of it. I was his, body and soul, if he wanted me, though at that time I hardly realised what would be involved in the surrender. Only I knew *that* was no good. All the beautiful women in London were in love with him. They swept down to his dressing-room after the show—not all at once, of course—glorious creatures of both worlds, trailing their splendid gowns, their bosoms like snow melting beneath sprays of feverish orchids,

their coiffures piled up and glittering with diamonds, their nostrils quivering—grand creatures, who when they rode or drove in the Park were stared at by gaping crowds.

These women were at his feet. He could do what he liked with them. They fought for him, as the greater beasts fight, with tropical violence, but he—he slid through the liana when the fur flew, his big full eyes glistening and amused. He provoked them to death. They knew they were never sure of him; at any moment, however intimate, he was probably thinking of some one else.

Yes, he was damned fatherly, bless his heart.

"You must arrange to live with some nice girl in New York. I don't want to have to be bothering about whether you're all right. You see, I took you on from your father; it's a sort of trust. And New York's rather a naughty place——"

"I know," I said demurely.

Reflected in the mirror I caught a twinkle from his large bright eyes which looked naughtier than New York could possibly be.

"You don't!" he laughed, smoothing his very sleek head with a beautiful, not over-manicured hand. Just right, I thought, everything about him was just right though he was not really good-looking; his clothes, always perfect, his exquisitely shod little feet, which were just a size too small for the rest of him. So small that sometimes they succumbed to his increasing bulk, and twice he had sprained his ankle on the stage, and been off long enough to slacken the business.

"You don't!" he laughed again, turning round and



taking my hand loosely in his and looking vaguely at the palm as he went on: "You know your father would blame me if anything happened to you."

"What *could*?" I asked innocently, simply to lead him on.

"What could?" his brown eyes twinkled lustroously. "You might lose your luggage." He was aware of the provocation in that "What could?" but he was laughing at me, at my knowing innocence. He swung my arm a little, looking at me benevolently. Such an innocent kid from a good home, who *would* go on the stage. . . . Damn it all, I must really find out something about Life.

Well, perhaps New York. . . .

We sailed for New York at the end of September, and must have got into the Equinoctial gales. Our boat was the *Philadelphia* of the American Line. That voyage out was one of my bitterest experiences. My only marine adventures had been the Channel and the Isle of Man crossings, in both of which I had proved my unseaworthiness. But I had not imagined the agony of protracted nausea, the ghastly retching which seemed to tear the walls of one's stomach, the panic that seized me every time a great wave crashed as though we had struck a rock in the depths of the terrible sea. Ethel (she who was kissed in Bond Street) and I and another shared a very small cabin in the bowels of the ship. There was no ventilation, and the smell was disgusting. We were all sick for the first few days; then the others clambered on deck. At the climax of the storm my mattress which was filled with air, collapsed, and a grey-faced young steward had to blow it out with his mouth. This was too much for him—and far too much for me. I remained below

until the last day, when I staggered up, more dead than alive, wearing a green box-cloth coat trimmed with astrakhan, which was very smart but not quite the right colour. The terrific discomfort of this voyage was never repeated. On the return journey we went White Star in the same boat as Charles Hawtreys, and I had by then learnt that as soon as you go on board you should go straight to the Purser, much the most important individual in the ship, if you care about comfort. Single state-rooms with baths invariably resulted.

Hawtreys's success in New York was immediate and phenomenal. The smart first-night audience greeted him with rapture. His modest friendly little speech, given at the end of the show instead of half-way through, was exactly right, like everything else about him. American audiences even on first nights had a habit of rushing for the doors at the fall of the curtain, but on this occasion they stayed to cheer. New York went mad about him; the Press raved. His social attributes were heavily stressed; he was one of England's aristocrats; he was a close friend of Edward VII.; he was an Oxford Blue (he was not). Charles Frohmann had picked a winner this time, and the tour he had booked for us round the States was cancelled. We stayed six months in New York, which no English company had been known to do before, with packed houses all the time.

Jessie Bateman played Minnie the heroine in London and New York. She was the prettiest creature, and the New Yorkers were delighted with her intensely English refinement. She was content when she was not being fêted to spend quite a lot of time with Ethel and me in the large room we first inhabited in 25th Street.

She would sing Paul Rubens' "I Love You, Ma Chérie" in a sweet little voice to my accompaniment. Sometimes an extra loud barrel-organ struck up its weekly "Good-bye Dolly Grey" outside and we would join in the chorus:

Good-bye, Dolly I must leave you,  
Though it breaks my heart to go;  
Something tells me I am needed  
At the front, to fight the foe.

But I had fallen for a new and exciting kind of music. Rag-time.

The greatest thrill on Broadway was the Weber and Fields theatre. That show still glitters in my memory with the eternal sparkle of a diamond. What a show! Oh, what a show! Weber and Fields themselves were tramp Kosher comedians who talked in what at first seemed unintelligible gibberish, but gibberish so obviously worth studying that soon there was not a joke I missed. Then glorious Lilian Russell, not in her first youth, with little voice left, and De Wolf Hopper, who supported her to perfection. Fay Templeton, ugly and clever, singing wicked little songs while the chorus danced around her. The Chorus! That was the biggest thrill of all. In London in those days one took it for granted that with a few outstanding exceptions who either married into the peerage or became stars, the chorus girl need do no more than come on at the right moment, look lovely, do a few easy steps when necessary, sing more or less in tune, and fill as many stalls as possible with presentable admirers. The Weber and Fields chorus was a revelation. When they appeared, it was a tornado of pep and energy; splendid athletic girls they were who knew their job, danced and sang with exuberance,

filled the stage with flaming vitality. Bonnie McGinn! What happened to her? She was one of the leading dancers and my dear favourite, grace and energy personified. They told me afterwards that she had danced herself to death, but I would rather think she danced herself to the fame she deserved.

We seemed to spend a lot of time at Weber and Fields. Matinéés didn't clash, and they were generous with seats. Hawtreys was there as often as we were, generally with Arthur Playfair; the novelty of the show fascinated him, and the humour of the two comedians themselves. The music was the last word in rag-time. I bought all of it that I could lay my hands on and played it execrably, but should have played it worse if I hadn't been brought up on Schumann and his syncopation.

I might have forgotten the name of that unforgettable show if I did not possess an extremely common photograph of myself at a piano which is entirely covered with its music. It was *Hoity Toity*.

In that first big room of ours there was a double bed that shut up in the day-time. Lying awake one night with Ethel dreaming beside me, I saw by the light of the street lamp, which cast a permanent spotlight on us as we slept, two small black objects moving across the sheet. I shook Ethel awake, and we both leapt out of bed, and spent the rest of the night on chairs.

Next morning after a good deal of hesitation we took courage and told the landlady of our terrible discovery. All she said was:

"Well, well, I didn't know there was any bugs in *that* bed."

A good swill of paraffin, and all, she declared, would be well.

We moved next to a theatrical boarding-house farther up town, a dreary looking place enough, but full of hidden drama. Here I met Arthur, a pale actor with untidy hair, a prim mouth and wanton eyes. He had been in a stock company somewhere in the middle West.

"Why, sister, I'm a minister's kid same as you!"

A dear boy, simple and homely, but for some reason rather *cinquecento* Italian to look at. He would sit for hours in my room, smoking and chattering, and singing such little songs as:

"I'm tired of living alone  
I want a sweetheart of my ow-own  
Some one to caress me  
To help to undress me  
I'm tired of living alone."

His conversation was decidedly part of my worldly education, though he was not conscious of it. He presumed a wider general knowledge than was there and I could look wise when necessary. There was that girl playing in *Pretty Sue*. Had I noticed her? Quiet-looking girl, sitting by herself at meals not saying "bo" to a goose. But all the men in the house had had her, and they were all sorry for it. Sorry? Why? Wasn't she nice?—No she wasn't. She was sick.

Something mysterious here. I watched the correct young woman intently in the dining-room. She was quietly dressed, neatly, like a governess, had a goodish figure and hardly spoke to any one. I couldn't imagine any man wanting her much. Yet they all had—even Arthur, probably, though he swore not. And they were sorry for it.

What power! To make half a dozen men sorry, and then to sit coldly watching them refuse beef-à-la-

mode and drinking water at meals. That was one way of asserting oneself. There was something sinister about this correct young woman who did not so much as flicker an eyelid in public, but spent her nights giving herself to impecunious young men who could not really afford her or the cure that followed.

There was a quaint little man who wore a very much cut-in tail coat, a bright waistcoat and shiny boots and was always finishing dinner when every one else began. He was on friendly terms with most of the men, and would go round exchanging jokes in a high-pitched voice, his top hat held daintily in one hand and his cigarette in the other before he danced out showing his teeth and flashing his eyes, into the street. I thought his cheeks were unnaturally pink.

"I should say so," said Arthur. "Can't you see he's painted?"

"Why doesn't he wait till he gets to the theatre?"

"He's not in the theatre! He's a cissie. Gets off with men. *You* know. (I didn't.) He's got nothing in the world but those clothes and his make-up box, and he hasn't paid any rent for months, and he'll soon have to go. Charley-boy, they call him. He'll never get properly taken care of."

Charley-boy! Dancing out into the night, his bright eyes flashing; a poor little male tart who would never be properly taken care of. It was certainly a queer boarding-house.

From this strange domicile I would go and enjoy a lively contrast at the home of John and Lina Greenough up near Central Park, in what was then the fashionable quarter. The Greenoughs were really the best that America could do, and it was very good; the nearest

thing to our unparaphrased aristocracy, worldly, but simple and unostentatious in their private life. Their home was beautiful, a model of comfort and elegance. They seemed to deny themselves nothing that could enhance the pleasure of living. Yet one knew that their first pleasure was in making other people happy. They were lucky people in that each was blessed with a generous spirit and had the means to indulge it fully. I loved going there; the atmosphere was warm and friendly, and the food always delicious. In fact, their house seemed to me the only real thing in New York, for I could never quite get rid of the impression that the city was a stage setting liable at any moment to collapse like a house of cards.

"Have you written home this week?" Hawtrey would ask severely. Always fatherly. Yes, I had written home, and I heard from home, very regularly. Edward's letters rambled along from his new old house Helensbourne, at Abingdon, where he was now to be established for some years, rambled along on all the topics under the sun. I was sending him small sums from my salary, because he lent me fifty pounds before I sailed.

Thank you, *he wrote*, for the many dollars remitted to my account. How many sock-shops<sup>1</sup> and fascinating muffs and such you must have scurried past on your way to the Post Office with head averted!

And I do love those photographs; I don't know which is the sweetest. . . . We shall miss you, dear, just the first Christmas in what may be called a home ever since we left Stonehouse. I was

<sup>1</sup>Etonian slang for sweet shops.

never quite at home at Hillingdon, though I loved it in many ways. . . .

Edward's letters made me a little home-sick sometimes.

Because I was photographed on Broadway, examples naturally got into the exhausting Sunday papers.

"*Faith Reynolds. English, can't you see it?*"

"*Miss R. is certainly a looker and a nice, nice girl.*"

This was not fame, but publicity for the photographer whose name was White.

Christopher, now at Christ Church, wrote almost exclusively of the theatre, with an occasional note about his own singing.

The songs which I am singing now are *Myrrha* by Clutsam, *Don Juan's Serenade* and *Fifinella* by Tschaikovsky, and *Snowdrops* (duet by Liza Lehmann which we can sing together), and *Violets* by some woman; you probably know the last one; it is exactly like *Salut d'Amour*.

A "matinée musical" at Oxford excited him very much.

Maurice Farkoa sang some of his very best, including *Nini*, *Ninette*, *Ninon*, and *I Want Yer Ma' Honey* and *Mrs. 'Enry 'Awkins* (both in French). He also sang a duet out of *Kitty Grey* with Edna May. Edna sang a lot of solos, mostly encores. She was most frightfully overdressed; a vast hat like a cedar tree after a snowstorm, and more hair than ever. A very furry coat which I can't quite remember, and a sort of emerald green fichu business round her throat. Her skirt was dark



plush with rings of fur all the way down. I was sitting just underneath (quite a respectable distance you know) and her scent reached me in the middle of the first verse. She was simply adorable.

My thirst for travel was moderately assuaged by this New York adventure, but as soon as we returned to London I tried to get myself engaged for Australia, or better still South Africa. But I had no luck, and eventually went on tour in the Black Country for nine months. From the professional point of view it was a ridiculous waste of time, for I played an old woman, wore a white wig, and had only one line to speak. I had to rush down the stairs screaming:

“My child, my child! They are hurting my child!”

I was immediately seized by the villainess and pushed off the stage, never to appear again. The play was *Sherlock Holmes*, and H. A. Saintsbury was the star, with Dorothea Desmond as the ill-used heroine. I understudied the villainess Madge Larraby, but never had the chance of pushing that poor old lady off the stage.

I lived with two other girls, and we were very comfortable on about twelve shillings a week each. I was getting three pounds a week for my one line, a great deal more than I was worth, so I had about sixty pounds in hand by the end of the tour. Our principal object was saving, as there was nothing on earth to spend money on in those dreary Northern towns. All the horrors of the profession we visited in turn, Blackburn, Bury, Keighley, Wigan, Gateshead, Wolverhampton, and the rest of them, in black winter weather. Yet we were not bored, for the interest of

new towns, new rooms and new landladies never flagged.

There were nearly always cosy fire-lit sitting-rooms, the mantelpieces thick with photographs of actors and actresses who had inhabited the rooms and passed on. Signed photographs mostly, in various moods: "To dear old Ma Smith with all the best from Gertie and Billie"—two pretty things in tights and flower-shaped hats. A handsome tragedian whose compelling look challenged "Take me seriously or die," signed in a sweeping hand that brooked no interference, "To my good friend Mrs. Smith, in gratitude, cordially——" A pantomime boy of the old-fashioned breed, with bulging trunks and bust, signed simply "Yours sincerely, Mopsy."

What romance there was in those boudoir and cabinet portraits, some faded and old-fashioned, with names that had faded too! Faded before they had a chance to bloom, they flanked the lucky gifted ones who had pride of place on those mantelpieces, those flowers of the stage who came no more to towns on a No. 2 circuit, but whose distant glamour brightened the rooms they had once inhabited.

Theatrical hours on tour were totally unlike any one else's. The rhythm of the day throbbed on regardless of stuffy convention. A large breakfast at the reasonable hour of ten. Rehearsal possibly at eleven. In any case a splendid long morning which brought us to dinner at half-past two or three, tea at six, theatre at seven or seven-thirty, and hot supper at half-past eleven. An admirable time-table, only slightly disturbed by matinée days.

In the spring we went to pleasanter places, such as Harrogate and York, where I made a sensational visit

to Bishopsthorpe in my landlady's husband's cab, to have lunch with the Archbishop whose son, Eric Maclagan, had been at Stonehouse. We went also to West Hartlepool where Compton Mackenzie was born. While I was wandering along the coal-dusty beach with one of my girl friends and a young man in the company, who alternated between the three of us throughout the tour without coming to any definite conclusion one way or another, Christopher at Oxford was launching out in a new and fateful friendship with a freshman at Magdalen, who nineteen years earlier had been born before his time in theatrical rooms at West Hartlepool.

At the end of our tour Nannie and Clydie (those were the names of my two companions) were better friends with me and each other than they were at the start. We had shared the attentions of the only young man in the company who appealed to us (and who walked on the beach at West Hartlepool) with the utmost goodwill and scarcely, except in our worser moments, a trace of jealousy. A fine test for the best part of a year in the Black Country.

Now Charles Hawtrey came back from his second visit to America and produced Anstey's *The Man from Blankley's* at the Prince of Wales' theatre. He offered me a tiny maid's part, one line but a lot of work. Ethel would play the other maid; so there we were, together again, with the Guv'nor.

Blankley's was great fun. A six-course dinner occupied the whole of the Second Act. Ethel and I had to wait on the freaks seated at the large round table, with Arthur Playfair as the butler, Mr. Dawes. The waiting was complicated as it had to be meticulously timed not to cover any one's lines. We were

clearing away the soup plates as the curtain went up, so that had to be merely a brown smudge at the bottom of the plates. Then followed fish (white bread), cutlets which were pieces of toast decorated with frills, and real French beans; a joint, which Arthur Playfair appeared to carve with a magnificent air at the side-board, a mock sirloin with slices of gingerbread attached. It was accompanied by some sort of vegetable, but I forget what. All this had to be eaten with some appearance of relish. Then a sweet, followed by savoury, and finally we went round with trays while Playfair removed glasses and silver for dessert. Dessert set, we retired from the scene. We never slipped up on our waiting all through that London season. Ethel had one line to speak, and I had three words. They were "Oh, Mr. Dawes!" as I went out with a tray of dishes.

Fanny Brough played the hostess. Her furious demand of her henpecked little husband, "Did you order a *lord*?" still rings in my ears. The story is well known. Hawtreys, the lords, had wandered by mistake into the wrong house, where a man hired from Blankley's was expected to fill a vacant place. Henry Kemble, Aubrey Fitzgerald, Holman Clark and Lydia Rachel were some of the impossible guests. There were several lovely freak parts, three of which I understudied and longed to play, but never had a chance.

In the autumn of 1903 *Blankley's* moved to New York, and most of us with it. It was too essentially "Punch" to appeal to the New Yorkers, and this time we followed our schedule and went on the road. We started grandly at the National Theatre, Washington, followed by a week at Detroit and then three weeks at Powers' Theatre, Chicago.

The thermometer was I don't remember how many degrees below zero when we were in Chicago. The hotel was so over-heated that one gasped for breath indoors as well as out. I recklessly decided to go shares for a change with a dashing blonde whose intriguing appearance had for some time filled me with curiosity. Going shares meant taking it in turns to make breakfast in our rooms, having a drink after the show together, and being mutually dependent to a reasonable degree. She was a great coarse creature whose mouth was like a gash across her face, but whose shapely arms ended in delicately beautiful hands with tapered fingers. But the palms were fleshy.

My alliance with Vicky showed me life from a new, if not particularly fresh, angle. Our tea-basket breakfasts were nothing new, but there was distinct novelty about the evening drinks. We would sit down and order our highballs in the huge bar full of men, and before long a waiter would come along with a note, which Vicky would scan, together with its sender. Soon our table would be surrounded by drummers,<sup>1</sup> and Vicky would be holding court and champagne would flow. We always went up to bed in the same lift, and slept on the same floor, and it never occurred to me that Vicky did not say Good-night for good to these gentlemen at the same time as I did. Until one morning at six o'clock I was awakened by her standing at my bedside:

"For God's sake come and help me. That fellow from Springfield—I can't get rid of him he's so drunk. . . ."

I put on my dressing-gown and went along to her room and there was one of our friends of last night

<sup>1</sup>Commercial travellers.

stretched out incapable on the floor. A horrid fat man. I pulled him up and his breath suggested rotting corpses. He fell against me, and I thought he was dying, but he was just drunk. Together we propelled him out into the corridor. There was no one about, and we got him along as far as the lift and deposited him by it.

"Thank you, old dear, for your help," said Vicky when we got back to her room. "This is between you and I, isn't it?"

"Of course. Between you and I," I agreed. I went back to my room and was sick.

This episode was never mentioned again by either of us, and I continued to frequent her room, and gaze at her as she lay on her bed, suffering torments of indigestion, her too too restraining "straight-front" corsets torn asunder with a gesture of despair, her flabby body released like waters rushing a broken dam. What an awful life! There was a gloomy fascination in the sight of so much misery endured for the sake of a comparatively flat stomach.

Looking back so far into the distant past, I am able to regard myself objectively and wonder at my curious taste for adventure. For all these people were to me adventures, enthralling while they lasted. There seems, however, little to recommend this small Chicago episode as a contribution to experience. I was none the worse for it, nor was I any the better. Nor was I better or worse for the companionship of Weinberger, who did amazing card tricks for me on the floor of his room. He was a drummer, like all the rest of the men in the hotel who were not actors, but I thought he must do a bit of card-sharpping as a side line; his three card trick was too good to be just a game to

amuse the ladies. He showed me some Chicago night-life and once he took me to a concert and insisted on my chewing gum with him. I was embarrassed when I looked up and caught Charles Hawtrey's mocking eye as he sat in a box with Arthur Playfair. I couldn't imagine what one did with chewing-gum when it was finished, and when, indeed, was it finished? And as long as it was in one's mouth one must chew it. I sacrificed my clean handkerchief and wished I could persuade my companion to do the same and not to shame me before my boss. This must have been one of those "Sacred Concerts" that were so popular in America at that time. Every star of vaudeville appeared in them, and Profane would have been a better name, but the Law had to be respected. All theatrical representations were forbidden on the Lord's Day. One of these concerts in New York made a deep impression upon me. I heard Sousa's band for the first time, and went mad about it. Then a little creature called Elfie Fay, who could not have been better named, came on and sang some dainty songs, to be followed by Elsie Janis, that brilliant child, who did the wickedest imitation of Elfie Fay. Then Elfie came on again and did an imitation of Elsie Janis imitating Elfie Fay, and showed what a little comedian she was too, and so they went on, finishing with a song and dance together to our rapturous applause. That Sacred Concert was certainly a model.

It was in Chicago that I heard from England of my sister Margaret's engagement. The possibility of any one of my brothers and sisters marrying had become so remote that I was immensely stirred by the news and longed to go home. It was no use saying to Vicky:

"My sister is engaged to be married!"

I could get no adequate response from her. Why should I?

"Is she, dear? Fancy! Shall you be a bridesmaid?"

I passed through the Vicky stage rather quickly after this, and spent the rest of the tour very happily sharing with Millie, who was now established as wardrobe mistress. She was really much the dearest person in the company. I had known this for a long time. When we were at the Avenue in the early days and she was our dresser with her chair in the corner next to mine, I had half-realised her quality. Her sisters kept a paper and sweet shop in the Fulham Road, and I spent a good deal of time there talking over the counter and sometimes going through the door that had a muslin curtain over its little window into the living-room at the back where Millie would be busy making a dress for one of us. She was an exquisite needlewoman, and gave all her spare time to doing over or making for the girls in the dressing-room.

"Millie, how's my blue dress getting on?"

"It's not getting on. I can't be bothered with it . . ."

"When shall I come to be fitted?"

"Any time you like. You won't find anything ready."

"I'll come to-morrow then. Shall I come to the shop?"

"Just as you please. Did you want me to buy the stuff?"

"You old fraud. You know you've begun it."

"What did I say?"

Sometimes her dark young face would be twisted with pain.



"What's the matter now, Millie?"

"Same old trouble. Don't know what it is. But I get a chronic pain in my side sometimes. I suppose it'll all come out in the wash."

And now, in America, Millie was always having pains, but never bothered to find out what they were. She became vague if any one suggested a doctor.

"Oh, yes. I expect so. When I've time. When I get back home'll be soon enough."

A horrid week of one-night stands followed Chicago, which obviously tried the patience of our chief and exasperated everybody concerned. Columbus, Dayton and Springfield, all O., Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Ind. Hawtry, in an interview at the end of the tour, frankly announced that of all dismal places Fort Wayne was the most depressing. We reached the limit of endurance in that one-eyed little town with its single hotel, and if the comforts of St. Louis had not followed very quickly on this nightmare week, I think Hawtrey might have been tempted to throw up the tour altogether, especially because *Blankleys* was a frost everywhere, utterly lost on the Middle West. For the next three weeks we were kept alive by the prospect of a new play in the repertoire, which was put up at Boston in the Hollis theatre. It was Burnand's *Saucy Sally*, a farce in which Hawtrey had unlimited opportunities for lying, one of his strongest suits on, and possibly off, the stage. The *Saucy Sally* was a phantom yacht invented for the benefit of his wife and mother-in-law, the latter played by Fanny Brough. I was again given a maid's part, but this time a more important one which involved a good scene with Fanny Brough, when precious trophies brought home by her

son-in-law were discovered on being dusted to have shop labels, and the game was up.

After Boston more one-night stands, but these were all in New England, Mass. and Me., charming little towns whose wooden hotels were banked with dazzling snow; we drove about in sleighs drawn by enormous horses under a brilliant sun. Food was eatable, which it had not been in O. and Ind., and the atmosphere in spite of prohibition was cheerful and free from squalor. A whole fortnight of this, ending with Providence, R.I., brought us to Philadelphia, which was to me the high spot of the tour. I loved the Quaker city with its Walnut Street and Chestnut Street and its old-fashioned dignity.

All the people I met had Quaker ancestry, if they were not still practising Friends. I had plenty of beaux, and a gay time with country clubs and studio parties, all as nice and respectable as could be, and it rests very comfortably in the memory. The most exciting person I met was a member of one of the "leading families" of Philadelphia, a girl who had kicked over the traces, tried nursing, been dismissed for insubordination, and gone on the stage in search of adventure; had had a wild love affair with a famous athlete, and now that it was over was determined that I should meet him. She so whetted my appetite that I was equally determined. She would recite with eyes closed Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and Browning's *Now*:

"Out of your whole life give but a moment"

with occasional extracts from Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Her passion for Sam the athlete was an agonising

one. She knew he had passed along as far as she was concerned. There he was in New York, busy with a thousand love affairs (oh, quite a thousand), the gayest and most popular bachelor in town, and here was she in Philadelphia tossed by a perpetual tempest of love that gave her no peace. By the time I went back to New York she had written to Sam: "Sam, darling, you must know my cute little English friend. Take her out for my sake," and I was surprised and disgusted that he was not at our opening night at the Criterion theatre. This theatre had a plague of rats. One of the freaks in *Blankley's* wore a heavy net and bugle dress, and one night she went through the entire play with a rat in her train. She noticed it was heavy but it was not till the end of the last act that as she sat down her train gave a jump. She had a weak heart and nearly died of shock. Finally the rat had to be cut out of her dress, it was so inextricably caught in its meshes.

I had given up any hope of Sam, when he suddenly turned up at the theatre and took me out to supper. The best thing about this episode is that I sailed for England a fortnight after I met him. He sure was one of the world's charmers, and it was hard for me to do the right thing by Rose.

"What's Rose?" he cried after we had been acquainted for a week. "Good heavens, child, Rose and I are friends. She's a bully friend. She told me to take care of you. What do you think she meant? Come on, now. Let's go get married at the Little Church Around the Corner. It's open all night."

We had had supper and were driving round Central Park in the moonlight when he made this suggestion. It was a risky one, though it was only made by way of conversation. A girl might accept, and there was

no time of the day or night when one couldn't get married at the famous Little Church Around the Corner. But doubtless he had a good getaway up his sleeve for romantic emergencies.

We were on the full tide of adventure when Rose came up to New York to say good-bye to me. She stayed at the Martha Washington, which was a wonderful hotel for women, with nothing old-maidish about it. Everything was slap-up and smart, with nice little apartments to suit all purses, good food, and hair-dressers and bookstalls on the premises. Here I visited her when she arrived, and was greeted with a flood of passionate questions. Had I seen Sam? Had he taken me out? Had he been good to me? Had I fallen for him? To all of which I answered frankly, "Yes." She flung her arms round me.

"I'm so glad, honey. I wanted you to love each other. I planned that the moment I saw you," and I really think she meant it. But the few days that were left for me in New York were disquieting ones, for it was soon obvious that though Rose was full of generous impulses the situation became more and more unbearable to her; and in vain I assured her that though I had fallen for Sam we were not serious, and anyway I was sailing in a few days.

"But he tells me he asked you to marry him!" she cried. "Why don't you?"

"At the Little Church Around the Corner." I laughed. "That was only an after-dinner speech."

She suddenly leant forward and buried her small nose in the lilies of the valley that I was wearing. Then she burst into tears.

"Forgive me, honey. But he used to give me those flowers. He knew they were my favourites."

Cruel, or forgetful Sam! I made it worse by trying to give her some of them. Why did she torture herself with all this, and why did she ever want us to meet? She was "crazy" about us both, and there must have been a subconscious desire to show us off to each other. We had agonising lunch parties at Sherry's and the Beaux Arts, and were all as bright and unnatural as possible, and at last the day came for me to leave.

Sam ordered "a little cab on four wheels" to take me to the docks, and Rose went with me. As the *Minnetonka* glided out of the harbour, and I saw them standing there waving, I thought with mixed emotions that to-night they would dine together, and that I should probably never see either of them again. Nor did I.

The treasured and only letter that I had from fascinating Sam got to England before me, for Atlantic Transport was the slowest but not the least pleasant way of crossing the Atlantic. It began, "Hello little sister!" and the rest I have forgotten. The tour was over, Charles Hawtrey's "third and last American tour," and there I finished with Hawtrey. He was fatherly to the end, and spoilt one for any other management whatever. He was, I think, as courteous as it is possible to be to the people working with him. I have seen his face twitch with exasperation but I never saw him lose his temper at rehearsal. He would lead one into a corner of the stage and patiently point out what it was he wanted done. No one was ever publicly humiliated by him.

And this of two years later is the last Hawtrey incident in my tale. I had lost sight of Millie, but when I heard that she was housekeeping for him, I went to his flat to see her. I was not prepared for the



COMPTON MACKENZIE AT TWENTY-THREE



change in her, and she knew when she opened the door for me that I was shocked.

"Wouldn't have known me again would you?" she laughed. "A proper old skeleton I am. Something wrong with my poor inside. I'm not much use to any one now, but the Guv'nor pretends he thinks I can housekeep for him. That's the Guv'nor all over, isn't it?"

There was nothing left of Millie, and there was no hope for her. But she laughed and chatted that afternoon as though we were back in the old days on tour; there was not a trace of self-pity in her make-up.

A month or two later I heard that she had gone to hospital, and visited her there the day before her operation. I held her shrunken white hand, and watched the Millie smile struggling through the painfully drawn lips, but no twinkle was in her eyes. When I kissed her forehead I knew it was good-bye for ever, and walked down the ward in a state of gloom followed by another woman who had been visiting her.

"Oh, God," I exclaimed, "hospitals depress me beyond words."

"Oh, I *don't* agree with you," she said brightly. "Everything so beautifully done and so clean, and such care for the patients. I love hospitals! How lucky Millie was to get a bed, when there's such a run on them."

I knew that was what I ought to feel about hospitals, but I went away without admitting it. A few days later Millie died. They had cut her open, but there was nothing to be done. It was much too late. As long ago as the Avenue days, when she had worked in that airless dungeon, she was the victim of T.B.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### COMPTON MACKENZIE

THE end of my time with Charles Hawtrey was not quite the end of the stage for me. I was still hoping for a world tour or something exciting to turn up, but I had no luck. "Poor little Faith is tramping round looking for work," wrote Edward in his diary. Before I settled anything I went down to Abingdon for Margaret's wedding. Helensbourne, Edward's home at Abingdon, was a lovely seventeenth-century house, rather too near the church, which was rather too proud of its bells. The house faced the street with dignity, and at the back was a pleasant garden to which Edward and Ruth devoted themselves diligently. At the end of the garden was the river, with a wooden landing-stage, and above, a semi-circular "look-out," with a chestnut tree in the middle of it. It was a shady place for hot summer days.

Margaret looked, said Edward, "like a perfect saint in her white dress." The climax of her beautiful romantic wedding (and it was both) would be the departure of the bride and groom by boat, rowed by two Blues, up the river to Nuneham. The guests would assemble on the look-out and give them God-speed. Unfortunately some of the guests were not content with the look-out, but crowded on to the landing-stage. The last straw, so to speak, was the leap of Arthur Coleridge, a weighty man. As the boat drew away, there was a rending crash and about twenty people

were flung into the water. The bridal party wisely decided not to interfere.

"Row on!" cried the bridegroom.

Now was the time for quick decisions. It would be against all precedent for a bridal pair to turn back. I only know of one accidental case where a train backed into the station it had just left, disclosing to the still mustered guests the bride in floods of tears.

Margaret and her husband wisely ignored the tumult and floated calmly into their honeymoon. The rest of the afternoon at Helensbourne was given to succouring the dripping guests, who pretended at any rate to appreciate the novelty of the situation, and no one was the worse for it. But, as Edward says, "If the whole of the supports had given way, there might have been a dreadful story. *Deo gratias.*"

The day after the wedding I went over to Oxford. While I was in the States, Christopher was "neglecting his studies," singing duets with himself at smokers, soprano and baritone, and making friends with a Magdalen poet called Mackenzie. I was to meet this remarkable person as soon as possible. He was engaged to be married, but that did not prevent his sharing a house with Christopher at Burford. They were going to rent Lady Ham, the most beautiful house in England, and spend their vacs and perhaps the rest of their lives there. I must come and stay with them as soon as they were settled in. A little river flowed right under the windows, and there was an orchard beyond, and a wide stream with Burford Church on its other bank. The river was the Windrush; it went wandering through the Cotswold country and was in places navigable by canoe.

There was another house on the small estate, and

this would be occupied by George Montagu<sup>1</sup> and Bobbie Whitworth-Jones. Everything, he wrote, would be in running order by August. Meanwhile I must come to Oxford as soon as my tour was over.

So it came about that on May 25th, 1904, I sat in Christopher's shaded room in Christ Church, having tea with some half-dozen undergraduates, suffering violent toothache, and waiting with some apprehension for the arrival of the Magdalen poet, who was very late.

Then the door opened, and he was in the room. My first impression was of a bright emerald-green tie and an enormous pair of eyes which seemed luminous in the darkened room. As he came into the light of the bay window, I saw the rose-leaf complexion, the small pretty Cupid's bow mouth, the sloping poet's brow, and then the wan crooked smile which so surprisingly tautened the Cupid's bow of a mouth. I saw that the eyes were deep violet blue.

This, then, was Monty Mackenzie! I was overwhelmed by the manner in which his personality took charge of the room and everything it contained. Everything else, including myself, became insignificant. I was not at all pleased.

"Toothache?" he was saying. "Give your sister a glass of port, Christof. Port. That's what she should have. The best thing for toothache."

I was given a glass, and sipped it unwillingly. I felt small and helpless, acutely conscious that no power on earth could shake the immanence of this too vivid personality. He was there, secure as a planet in our firmament. I watched him as he talked, enchanting his audience (for indeed it seemed to be instantly

<sup>1</sup>Now the Earl of Sandwich.

that); I noted as he held the floor, his graceful telling gestures, so rare in England, and the beauty of the great head, and the wideness of the cheek-bones, the fine sharpness of the shapely nose.

That great head, I learnt afterwards, had nearly killed his mother, and but for the timely arrival of a new instrument in West Hartlepool, it would have had to be crushed to save her life. A seven months' child, born in the wrong place, upsetting all parental calculations. Son of an actor and actress, with generations of art, letters and scholarship behind him.

I saw him no more at Oxford, for he was very much engaged. But I went to stay at Lady Ham in August and spent my first evening in a room full of young men and tobacco smoke. Christopher sang "If No One Ever Marries Me" in a sweet soprano, and I did my tenor imitation of Hayden Coffin, but the best thing of the evening which I shall never forget, was a scene between two Frenchmen improvised by Monty Mackenzie and Hugo Rumbold, that went on most of the night. Hugo was then an exquisite creature of about eighteen, and as clever at impersonation as Monty. Next morning Monty was gone, and Christopher too.

Hugo was staying in the other house, and there was much talk of his brilliant impersonations of women. He had lately partnered a bishop at a swell dinner wearing a blonde wig and low-cut dress. Better still, a stiff and tiresome man at a house-party had tried to snub Hugo as Hugo. But he was enchanted by his pretty neighbour at dinner, Hugo again, who coyly refused a walk in the moonlight. No one had ever caught him out in these impersonations, and when I was asked to lend him a dress and hat to wear

at a garden party, I hadn't a moment's uneasiness, though the party was given by good friends of Monty and Christopher whom I had never met. Hugo sent for wig and stays and long white gloves, and the preparations for this joke were certainly better than the joke itself. He was a ravishing sight in my green striped summer frock with a fichu and a lot of frills, and a large heavily trimmed hat with a white veil. But he looked fearfully improper, and not the sort of lady generally seen at country garden parties. We all drove there in a hired wagonette. It was a brilliant sunny day, the kind of day one prays for on these country occasions but seldom gets. We were put at a table for tea in the full sun as soon as we arrived. There we sat, the cynosure of curious eyes. Hugo had never worn a veil before, or if he had, he had never had to deal with it seriously. Impossible to pretend to drink tea without lifting that damnable veil. It was one of those thick gauzy ones that were fashionable at the time. He was the centre of interest, not because any one suspected his disguise at first, but simply because his appearance was exotic. Our hostesses hovered round us with conversation and proffered food. Hugo was mute. Then attempting to answer a direct question, he blushed and stammered. He had an attractive defect of speech which was only occasional but peculiarly his own. I felt rather than heard a gasp behind me, a sensation in the air as the daughters of the house receded from us. Hugo had actually been over and played tennis with them the week before, and his charming stammer had made its mark.

The tension became quite unbearable; it was now obvious that he was recognised, and that it was not regarded as a good joke. We made as dignified an exit

as possible, but there was thunder in the air. I have never spent a more embarrassing afternoon. When Christopher came back there was a tremendous row, and apologies were made and very generously received by our outraged hosts. This must have been Hugo's only failure; I think the cause of it was the uncompromising sunshine and the difficult veil, aggravated by the consciousness as soon as we arrived on the scene that it was the wrong place for such a jest.

I wrote my name among the rest with the diamond pencil on the window of Monty's library before I went away from Lady Ham, but he was still absent when I left. My rooms in London were now in Chester Terrace. As the walls began to come down in Beaufort Street Mrs. Berry and I made the move before I left for the second American tour. The house was a replica in size and period of Beaufort Street, but of course lacked the greenery which had surrounded No. 7. My "tramp" in search of work began again, but it was not a very earnest tramp, and I was surprised and rather bored to find myself once more on the way to America early in 1905. I was to play a straight *ingénue* part in a racing play which was as great a flop in New York as I was in my *ingénue* part. Half-way through the tour that followed I heard from Christopher that Monty Mackenzie's engagement had been broken off, and that they were probably going to live in rooms together in London when they came down from Oxford in the autumn. There had been an idea that Christopher and I should live together when that time came. So though a faint feeling of relief stole over me about the broken engagement, resentment was fierce against the overwhelming personality whose symbol was still for me an emerald-green tie.

Mrs. Berry had died while I was in America, so I moved from Chester Terrace to a little flat in St. George's Road, where a highly respectable lady who ran a social bureau took one girl lodger. As she was out all day, the flat was as good as mine. It was obviously a desirable home for an independent-spirited girl. Having settled my future plans, I set off on a round of visits, the best of which was a Cricket Week at Lady Ham. This time I did not stay with Christopher, but in the other house, my hosts being Bobby Whitworth-Jones and his sister Kate. Bobby was a huge temperamental creature who had played juvenile lead in *Iris* with Fay Davis and Oscar Asche. Christopher had several people staying in his house, and Monty was expected any moment. Christopher had had rather an attractive sounding suggestion to go tutoring in the holidays. We sat on the grass discussing it.

"Why don't you go?" I said as he seemed uncertain.

"I can't very well go away just when Monty comes back."

"Why ever not?" This absurd obsession with Monty seemed most unreasonable. "Surely he won't want you to give up this opportunity to make a little pocket-money and see some new country?"

I don't pretend that my rather heated arguments had any deciding effect, but in the end he did go on this tutoring expedition, which was Fate. For he found there the woman he would eventually love and marry.

Meanwhile Monty arrived, in the middle of the Cricket Week, which wound up with a Ladies *v.* Gentlemen match played on the Burford Club ground. I had heard he was deeply interested in a neighbouring young lady, so that I was a little bit surprised when, the

cricket being over to the confounding of the gentlemen, and tea in progress, he walked me up and down the field in full view of every one for more than an hour. It was the first time he had taken the slightest notice of me. I did not flatter myself that there was any other motive in this attention than a desire to tantalise the other lady. I was fascinated, however, by his conversation, and little was required of me but an air of intelligent interest.

I left Burford next day for some more visits, and one of the first things I did when I had settled down in the new flat in St. George's Road was to make an appointment with Monty's mother, who was engaging people for her husband's next tour. Christopher gave me a letter to her. The Compton Comedy Company had been touring the Provinces for many years, under the leadership of Edward Compton, who, like his famous father, had dropped the family name of Mackenzie for the stage. I felt Mrs. Compton did not take to me at all, and an argument as to whether Charles Hawtrey was an artist or not ended the interview with coldness on both sides.

Now Monty and Christopher were established in an old panelled rat-haunted house in Grosvenor Road. All those little houses are gone now. The landlady was a robust person with a small respectable-looking husband who worked at Westminster Abbey and knocked her about every Saturday night. This was not realised at once, and Christopher, coming home from a week-end one Monday morning, cheerily greeted Mrs. Chadwick, who wore a black eye which could not be ignored.

"Hul-lo, Mrs. Chadwick! Husband been knocking you about again?"



"Oh, sir, you will have your joke! I can't think how I came to fall downstairs so heavy last night. Tripped over the carpet and got myself a proper biff in the eye, I did."

This genial fiction was kept up for some time, until one week-end when they stayed in town and heard the racket.

It seemed a little extravagant for two young men on the threshold of life and with no money to speak of to keep a country house as well as rooms in town. This was the general feeling of parents and relations. The original Lady Ham scheme had been heavily criticised and obstructed when they were up at Oxford, although at first it sounded mild enough. It was to be taken for three years at a rental of sixteen pounds a year. This had included only one house and a walled garden. Monty was to read for the bar, and it would take two years to eat his dinners. He was going to specialise in Ecclesiastical and Canon Law, and he would go up to town four times a year to eat dinners and see a few theatres, enough to keep in touch with things, but not enough to be distracted by the world. Then their landlord fell into the Windrush and was drowned, and the whole property was put up for sale. If they did not buy it they would lose it altogether. With loans and mortgages they managed it, but it was a struggle. Then they settled down to poetry. Christopher wrote to Monty's mother:

The utter peacefulness of the orchard, with the stream and the willows, the cool hall and the general sense of sunniness, and yet the knowledge that Monty was managing to work and to turn

the inspiration of the place to its proper purpose, would have gladdened your heart.

But there were always misgivings about Monty's future. Would he ever really work, or would he just idle through life, talking brilliantly, writing when in the mood, "going round amusing people," as his mother described it, perpetually philandering? All very well, this idyllic life at Lady Ham, but where would it lead? His mother consulted Logan Pearsall Smith, who was the dominant influence in the intellectual lives of the young men, and received this reply:

I was very glad to hear news of Burford, and although there do seem many difficulties in the way, perhaps it is a good thing that the young people should have every chance possible to make a success of so charming an experiment. After all, it's the great tradition, poverty and simplicity and the muses, and in spite of worldly wisdom I don't like to go against it.

Others might have had misgivings, but Monty was generally optimistic:

I am nearly finishing a rattling one-act drama founded on a story of de Maupassant. I should think I could certainly get it produced all right.

I expect to have this house (Lady Ham) full all the Long with paying guests, which is comforting.

Also I have a fine idea for a five-act play on the theme of Disillusion which is quite novel.

Also I have Joan of Arc more or less constructed in my mind and only the writing to do.

Everybody who has read the speech is considerably impressed by it and thinks that it ought to make a sensation.

This letter was to his father, and the keynote of his side of the parental correspondence was: "Only have faith in me. I am not really wasting time or money, though it may look like it."

Though he was a generous and a wealthy man, Edward Compton could not approve of young men idling their time away writing poetry in a country house, with no apparent intention of earning an honest living. He himself had never had a chance of idling, and his fortune had been made by sheer hard work. For twenty-five years he had toured the provinces with old comedies, living unostentatiously in good theatrical rooms, never in hotels, a simple man of talent with great good looks and no genius. His elder son derived from his mother's family, the Batemans, where genius, goodness knows, was almost common currency. It was not surprising that this fabulous child bewildered him. True, both he and his wife had been troubled when Francis, the second son, showed no sign of being able to read *Don Quixote* at the age of four.

"Is this child, perhaps, an idiot?" they hazarded, and took him to a specialist. A normal reasonably intelligent boy. It was quite natural, they were assured, that Francis should not at the age of four know most of the stars, wild flowers and birds by name, nor be able to read *Don Quixote*, even though at the same age his elder brother had done so. This, they

must understand, was altogether exceptional if not unheard of. But Monty's vagaries more and more dismayed his father. His mother took them less hardly, because she understood them better. She could not honestly upbraid extravagance, because her heart warmed towards it. Schemes of all sorts were the breath of her life (and still are at eighty-five). She did not even falter when, after two summers at Lady Ham, Monty and Christopher decided that after all they must live in London. Monty wrote to his mother:

Our living in town exclusive of extra amusements but including all the necessities of life like tobacco, we figure out at £3 10s. *od.* a week between us.

We propose to dine with you twice a week. Other nights we shall dine in Soho, unless asked out.

It's all thoroughly sound, and when we have established ourselves on a sound financial basis, we shall return to the house of our fathers (which of course meant Lady Ham).

Whether it was sound or not, Mrs. Compton made it possible with loans of furniture and linen to make Grosvenor Road habitable and Lady Ham lettable, with a tenner here and there to ease things generally.

Their sitting-room was white, with apple-green paint, and looked out across the Thames to Lambeth. The bedroom was not so good, and faced Tilling's omnibus depot where each bus was tested between five and six every morning before it went out. Among other tests, each step was heavily jumped on and each bell rung. Christopher's nights were further dis-

turbed by Monty's habit of coming home in the small hours and eating noisily a large number of Lady Ham apples. From an early age Monty had sought the most amusing and least exacting company in the world. He enjoyed an evening spent with what were called ladies of the town. He was their champion and their idol. He loved their spontaneous laughter and their vivid sense of life. In their defence he would come to blows with constables of the C Division, whose levy of blackmail in those days was formidable and scandalous. He has the gift of belonging wherever he goes. If he plays with children he plays as a child; if he talks to Commanders-in-Chief he talks as one general to another; and in that half-world he frequented in those days he was not a young gentleman out for a lark, but a friend whom its citizens were quick to recognise and love.

It was an easy walk from St. George's Road to Grosvenor Road, and when Monty was out I used to go and have tea or cook sausages with Christopher, and sit on the narrow window seat watching the boats and barges on the river, and read a book or two. It was a relief from the triviality of the social bureau atmosphere and the depression of theatrical agents' waiting-rooms, to spend leisurely time with him, to find again something I had lost, something of the spirit which had evaporated in my American adventures. Christopher's mental sturdiness, his proved integrity, were tonic remedies for my loss of faith in life.

In that little green and white room I found my fate. I tried to avoid Monty, partly because I wanted Christopher to myself and partly because I was still shy and overwhelmed by him. But sometimes he

would come in and give me his crooked smile, and a sweeping glance from those appraising eyes.

One Friday, the 10th of November it was, I went round to see Christopher, forgetting that he was in the country for the week-end. I was well away from the house when Mrs. Chadwick came after me breathlessly, saying that Mr. Mackenzie wanted me to go up and see him. Though I had dined with him and Christopher, I hadn't yet been anywhere alone with him, except to a matinée at the Tivoli. So I rather shyly went upstairs, and was asked to wait for five minutes while he finished dressing, when he would take me out to lunch somewhere. We went to the Mont Blanc Café in Frith Street, and had omelette and coffee, a simple meal. After which we had tea somewhere, and then Monty went off to eat one of his dinners at the Temple.

I forgot my resentment. Antagonism collapsed. I was now under the spell.

From then on we met every day. His dinners at the Temple finished early, which made our evenings free. One night we went to Ealing to see his father in *The Rivals*. We sat in a box, and the company was struck by our likeness to each other. His sister Viola was playing Lucy. She was eighteen and this was her first tour. On the way home Monty recited some of his poetry in my ear, "The Child's Epic of the Night," "An Idyll of the Harvest Moon." We had supper at a long cheap restaurant called Gerli's near Victoria, and more poetry.

Another milestone that flew past in this lightning affair was a dinner for four at the Pall Mall Restaurant with Philip Lloyd-Graeme, now Lord Swinton, our host. We saw Tree as Fagin at His Majesty's, then

Christopher and Philip went off, and we supped at the Florence and drank *Lacrima Christi*.

And one afternoon, he and Christopher and I were invited by Lucy to hear the Nora Clench Quartet rehearse a new work which had never been played in England. It was Debussy's only string quartet. The artistes were rosy with the excitement of piecing together this exquisite mosaic which then seemed as complicated as a jigsaw puzzle. Monty's interest in music was adventitious in those days, and he frankly confessed afterwards that he found the quartet a strange and not very pleasant noise.

The next milestone was a concert at Queen's Hall, where the mother of my new friend Lois Godefroi was singing. Monty and I arrived very late, but just in time to hear Mrs. Godefroi sing. I cannot remember what she sang, but her voice was a sweet flexible *coloratura*. As for the rest of the evening, I remember nothing except that some hours after the concert I found myself leaning over Chelsea Bridge with Monty, time forgotten and the chill of a November night unheeded.

We loved the music-halls. The Metropolitan, Edgware Road, the Shepherd's Bush Empire, the Tivoli and the old Canterbury across the river, whose entrance was entirely lined with oyster shells. There such stars as Vesta Victoria, George Robey, Wilkie Bard, Victoria Monks and T. E. Dunville really let themselves go. Oysters at a little bar nearby, and then dawdling home over the bridge and by the Embankment.

One night we dined alone in Soho, and drove back to Grosvenor Road in a hansom with a little white horse, which looked round at us as we mounted the old-fashioned steps of No. 7.



LADY HAM, BURFORD (*Original of Plasher's Mead*)







"Friendly little white horse!" laughed Monty. "Wishing us luck."

That evening we decided to be married. As we sat entranced a large rat shambled along the low shelf of books at the back of us. Over his shoulder I saw it.

"Hallo, there's a rat," was all I said.

Christopher had been observing us with apprehension. If it were only a flirtation (and how was he to know?) it was a dangerous one, and if it were more, was it a possible marriage? His grumpiness was perfectly natural. He did not, as Edward would say, know what to be at. One evening when we were already secretly plighted and Monty was preparing to see me home to St. George's Road, Christopher laboriously discarded his slippers and began putting on his shoes.

"What are you doing?"

"Coming with you. I want a walk."

It was an unpleasant night and a solemn walk. Three silent figures crept through the November fog, down Grosvenor Road and the street that would later become Sinister, past St. Saviour's, Pimlico, which, so far, I had never entered, and so to St. George's Road and the big front door of the house that was turned into flats. Christopher had done his duty and spoilt his evening and ours.

We were so engrossed in ourselves that we utterly failed to see Christopher's point of view. I cannot remember that I was even conscious of the mess I should make of things if I broke up their alliance, just when they were so comfortably established in their new life. Yet no one could have less expected this development than myself. I had no designs on Monty; that one stroll on the cricket field at Burford had not

fired me with anything but admiration, for my thoughts had been far away, lost somewhere in America, and I had been sure that his were only a few hundred yards off.

Not only Christopher, but both our families, would frown upon the idea of our marriage. We agreed not to give them a chance. A secret wedding appealed to us both. We chose St. Andrew's Day, partly because we knew Christopher was going down to Eton for the Wall game. In a queer little wine-den in the Strand called the Snuggery we borrowed a Whittaker's Almanac, looked up licences, and found that a special one without banns could be had for a little over two pounds. We also discovered that it was cheaper to be married in church than in a register office. Next day, the 29th November, I went to tea at Grosvenor Road, and found Monty had been to Doctors' Commons and got the licence. The marriage must take place in my parish church, which was St. Saviour's, Pimlico, in St. George's Square. That evening Monty had to dine out, so I paid my first visit to St. Saviour's alone and found a service going on. At the end of this, I approached the verger, and asked if I could speak to the vicar.

"Mr. Washington's just coming out of the vestry. What is it you want?"

"Well, I want to know if he can take a marriage service to-morrow morning."

"Marriage?" said he, "I'm the man to come to for that. Have you got your licence?"

"Not here. We're going to call for it at Doctors' Commons to-morrow."

"But we must have forty-eight hours' notice so as to make inquiries at the homes of both parties."

"That won't do at all. We don't want any inquiries made. Please see what you can do to make it possible for it to take place to-morrow. I know you can."

"Well, well, I'll see what I can do!"

I left a note for Mr. Washington at his house in the square and went home to St. George's Road, where I found my little landlady and her sister chatting and cooking eggs in the kitchen. I told them I had been to church, kissed them good-night, and went early to bed. In the morning I had a note from Mr. Washington to say he would marry us at one o'clock. I went to Harrod's and changed Monty's cheque to pay for the licence, bought a pair of silk stockings for the wedding and then went by train to Blackfriars, where Monty and his brother Francis met me. Francis had been visited earlier in the morning by Monty, and told he must come and be best man at the wedding. Though he was shaving at the time he did not cut himself, but only said:

"Oh, by Jove. Rather."

We went to Doctors' Commons and completed the licence business. Then Monty and I went to Cheapside to buy the ring. For some reason I was too shy to go in, and gave Monty one for measurement. We parted at Westminster Bridge, promising to meet at the church at one o'clock. I dressed for my wedding in the clothes I had worn in most of our rambles, with nothing new except my silk stockings. I sauntered quietly round to the church and found Monty waiting in the porch, wearing a blue tie that matched his eyes and the suit I knew best. Francis was with him; I had met him before at Burford, so we shook hands without any preliminaries, and all went up to the chancel steps together. Another witness was needed, so a crossing

sweeper was brought in from the street by the verger, and sat, a solitary forlorn figure, at the far west end of the church.

While the verger was giving us hints about the marriage service in hearty tones, Mr. Washington appeared silently from the vestry, and married us with as little ado as can be imagined. The ring, which Monty tried to put on twice before the proper moment arrived, was the right size. The wedding was swift, but not perfunctory; there was a benevolent air about that bearded vicar which put us both at ease in a situation which had almost taken ourselves by surprise. Mrs. Compton had innocently lenther brougham and it waited for us round the corner. We drove to Brice, and ate a wedding lunch with Francis. The proprietor stood us a bottle of champagne, and all was gladness and good cheer. Why have a crowd at a wedding?

When I lunched with the Godefrois in Montpelier Square next day I was wearing my engagement ring, which had arrived that morning. It was not an expensive ring, but Monty's own design, a marquise crystal. It was unusual, and could not be ignored, but the other ring was hidden in my bag. The need for a confidante led me to show that other ring to Lois when we were alone after lunch, which was a severe test for the poor girl, who was sworn to secrecy and kept it faithfully. A tea-party in Fanny Burney's apartment in St. James's Palace, then occupied by Lois's brother Jocelyn, was a memorable trial for her. Christopher and I arrived together, and he was singing to my accompaniment when Monty appeared.

"Those two are married!" she longed to cry out to

the roomful of people, when, the song ended, Monty greeted me as well as the rest.

The feverish secret was revealed ten days later. Now that the marriage was a *fait accompli* there was no more reason for concealment. Monty wrote to his father and I to mine. He told his mother first and she came round to Grosvenor Road, kind but dismayed, and full of schemes. In order that "Father" should not be too annoyed, immediate steps must be taken to earn an independent income and not count on him for the allowance that was at present coming in. That allowance might now, indeed, very reasonably be withheld. There was no knowing how "Father" would react. Monty might go on the stage and join Ben Greet in America. That was an idea! The Bar was now out of the question.

"I'll write a play as a birthday present for Father," rashly promised Monty, who had no intention of going on the stage.

Mrs. Compton kissed her son with a sweetly sceptical air.

"Yes, do, darling. That will please him."

This was my first view of Mrs. Compton as a human being. When she interviewed me in August there was no warmth in our meeting. Now she had every reason to resent my emergence as a daughter-in-law without the slightest warning, but being a woman of great faith and severely tested philosophy she accepted me with a sigh and a pious hope. She gave me a friendly kiss, though she was clearly not having any nonsense.

Mr. Compton was displeased with Monty. A serious heavy father reaction threatened. He was deeply hurt, he wrote, by what he considered

Monty's want of confidence in him. To this his son replied:

I understand your feeling of being hurt that I did not tell you before. It was less intentional than it seemed, and really it did not strike me that you would be sensitive to what was really not at all a want of confidence but a decision not to worry you before an event. Personally I am always much less upset when a thing is done.

I feel perhaps you do not think I appreciate the single-heartedness of your life, your steady unselfishness and the sacrifice of ambition for the sake of your family.

I am now by my marriage happier than I have ever been, I have lost the restlessness which prevented me very often from irksome drudgery. I can sit down to work with pleasure. I long for the day to begin. I can get up in the morning. I can get to rest at night. Indeed, I am so profoundly changed by this step that I can only regard it as the most fortunate occurrence in the world.

It is a grief to me that it has upset you so much. It will continue to be a grief until I am assured that you not only tolerate it, but are *glad* that I embarked upon it.

You ask if determination to have one's own way is the right way to get on. By heaven it is! and the only way. . . . If I were not the most indomitable optimist conceivable I should long ago have become a bank clerk. . . .

Don't think this letter boastful, self-confident and absurd, but think what I have already done.

COMPTON MACKENZIE

1. Practically a volume of poetry. . . .
2. Successfully edited an Oxford paper (*The Oxford Point of View*).
3. Successfully managed a financially tottering club.
4. Written some very decent dramatic stuff.
5. Got a Second in Schools.
6. Paid for my school education entirely.
7. Made the friendship of a large number of admirable people.

And finally as I must think married an absolutely perfect wife.

I have on hand an enormous number of plays, poems, essays and God knows any amount of work.

*You simply shan't be disappointed.*

This letter to his father was written from Helensbourne. When Edward had opened my letter announcing our marriage he read it with deep absorption, and the maid who was in the room reported afterwards that he gazed for a long time out of the window in silence. Then a gentle humming told her that whatever it was that had set him thinking was all right.

In his diary he wrote:

Dec. 6th. A bomb-shell burst upon us. Faith was married on St. Andrew's Day to Monty Mackenzie. One hardly knows what to think of it yet.

This was his letter to me:

Helensbourne. Dec. 6th, 1905.

DARLING FAITH,—I can't quite approve and yet I am not furiously angry, as I suppose a sensible



parent should be. But I can imagine the charm of a romantic marriage with no trousseau or wedding breakfast. There is a spice of romance in this aged heart, and perhaps it has descended to you. As there was more than a spice in your mother, it is not unnatural. . . .

If you are happy, I am happy, and my only prayer is that the happiness may be lasting, and the honeymoon may be only the mother of honey years.

You are to keep a small corner of your heart for your loving daddo.

It was characteristic that he invited us down to Helensbourne at once. I kissed my kind astonished little landlady good-bye, and left for ever the flat I had gone on living in after my marriage. Monty arrived at Helensbourne with a high temperature. I had exclaimed in a moment of exuberance before we were married how much I should love to nurse him when he was ill. Fate, with indecent haste, acquiesced.

The Quartet came to stay for the week-end, as they were playing in the neighbourhood. The 'cellist was now the very young May Mukle, whose splendid playing greatly impressed Edward. Monty struggled up to meet them, and Logan Pearsall Smith and his sister, Mrs. Russell, when they came to tea from Iffley, but he had to go to bed again. Jaundice had him now for three weeks, the climax of intense emotional strain. This distressing attack did not break his spirit or mine. I had not exaggerated in my imagination the luxury of nursing him. Even with jaundice he was the most enchanting creature in the world. He is still the only person I know who can be sick amusingly.

On Edward's seventy-third birthday, New Year's Eve, we went back to London, and heard Big Ben boom in 1906 from Grosvenor Road. Now *I* should hear Tilling's buses tested and the rats scrambling in the wainscot—and sometimes out of it. Christopher had been at Helensbourne for Christmas, and accepted the new development in our relationship with his usual equanimity. Now that the marriage was done and his responsibility ended, he was ready to believe that it was a good thing to have happened. Monty was pouring out poetry, when he was not working at the play he had promised for his father's birthday present. Soon he would have enough poems for a book. Meanwhile I copied out what he had done in a beautifully bound volume whose hand-made paper was so superfine that it sometimes would not take my writing. While we were at Abingdon he wrote:

Our love came not upon a May-day morn,  
 It was not kindled by the eyes of Spring  
 Nor quickened by midsummer harvesting,  
 Nor did it ripen with the ripening corn:  
 But underneath grey skies our love was born,  
 On windy eves, a blown autumnal thing.  
 Which grew to hardihood amid the swing,  
 The clamour, and the surge of men toil-worn.

And I am glad it was not wrought by fays,  
 Of primrose blooms and star-shed gossamers;  
 And I am glad it came when tempests blow;  
 For Love which has endured the busy ways  
 And met the storm, is not a sojourner,  
 To come with swallows and with swallows go.

ABINGDON, 1906.

We had enough presents. A hundred pounds from Edward for my trousseau, an enormous dinner service from George Montagu, breakfast and tea-sets, an old four-poster bed for Lady Ham from the Greenoughs, a Persian carpet from Logan Pearsall Smith, Sheffield plate, a chafing-dish. There was, in fact, a complete absence of unpleasant objects or any sense of compulsion since there had been no genteel blackmail of silver invitations.

And there was a letter from one of Monty's ladies:

"I hear you've married a straight-cut."

Now I must go, as daughter-in-law, to dine at 11 Nevcrn Square, which Mr. Compton had bought when he left Avonmore Road. Mr. Compton himself was away on tour, still sizzling slightly with resentment at his elder son's indiscretion. Nevcrn Square was a very tall house, and two flights up I was powdering my nose at a mirror in a room that would soon become familiar to me. I heard a stir at the door and looked round to see two little girls shyly standing there. Monty's sisters, Katie and Fay! They were dressed in white with black velvet bands in their bright hair. So bright their hair was that it was like a flame in the doorway. They both had huge violet eyes, and rose-leaf skins. Katie's hair stood round her head like an aureole, Fay's was smooth as a newly shelled chestnut. Katie was small, slim and elegant; Fay, eleven years old, was plump with a round baby face.

There were oysters and champagne downstairs; it was a gala night at Nevcrn Square, and the little girls were allowed to sit up for dinner. The next evening,

no doubt, Mrs. Compton would be having a lightly boiled egg on a tray upstairs, and the large drawing and dining-rooms would be as dim as empty theatres. That was life at Nevern Square. When the master of the house came home from his tours the stage was set; extra servants were engaged and all was life and bustle.

Not long after we were married there was another gala night at Nevern Square. Addison Bright was bringing J. M. Barrie to dinner. There was a certain amount of business involved in this meeting, and as we waited for the arrival of the distinguished guest Mrs. Compton turned to us with an anxious glance. "Now, darlings, we must all like Mr. Barrie very much." We all did, of course, without difficulty, but there had been other less successful encounters.

Behind the scenes, the little girls moved in their own ambit, living like princesses in a tower at the top of the house, going with satchels to a day-school, riding picturesquely in the Park, painting and dancing and caring for dogs, and, most of all, acting, acting, acting and dressing up. At this moment of my introduction to them Fay was doing a pierrot turn in a children's show at the Philbeach Gardens parish rooms. As I stood in the crowded dressing-room I heard a mother say to her little girl:

"Be quick, darling. If you don't hurry and get dressed you'll be too late to see Fay Mackenzie."

The little girl turned fiercely on her mother:

"Fay—Fay—Fay! I'm sick of hearing *Fay*! I don't want to see her. I've seen her. Why should every one want to see Fay?"

This burning question has since been answered.

My apparently futile stage career had a purpose

after all. If I had met Monty in Christopher's rooms at Oxford, fallen in love and married him with nothing behind me but a quiet home life, I might have made a bewildered mess of it. That I should ever have tolerated a quiet home life was unlikely, but I might have escaped down some other road. In choosing the stage I had unconsciously laid a pretty good foundation for the peculiar structure of my future life. I was proof against surprises. I knew from the first that I didn't want a nice conventional marriage, and I was justifiably sure that I had avoided this. Monty described me as a perfect wife. He wrote this fully aware that I was incapable of cooking anything more elaborate than sausages, that I hated sewing and had no knowledge of housewifery whatever. Lily had taught me how to clean silver, how to make a bed, how to wash up. I had never kept house before I left home, for there had always been elder sisters to help Lily, who once said to me at Hillingdon:

"My dear child, you really must learn something about housekeeping."

"Oh, Mother, why?" was my response.

"But when you marry!"

"I've told you I shan't marry."

With a sigh she gave it up, and I went to my attic and pasted another picture of Ellaline Terriss on the wall.

One point was clear from the beginning of our marriage. In no circumstances would Monty be what is called useful about the house. Christopher had observed with surprise that the day he went to Doctors' Commons to get the marriage licence, he was up early, sang as he dressed, and *made the morning tea*, for the first (and last) time in his life. His clever constructive

hands, shaped like an engineer's, were deliberately clumsy with anything more formidable than a pen, a billiard cue, a knife and fork or a walking-stick. Sometimes he hung a picture because he was absolutely the only person who knew exactly where it should go, but it was a great business and not often repeated. Because of this attitude, so clearly defined, he was utterly uncritical of my housekeeping. He never grumbled. His tastes were simple; he hated fuss as much as I did. In the first year of our marriage we lived at Grosvenor Road and Lady Ham. But nearly half the year was spent in visits. At Grosvenor Road Mrs. Chadwick "did" for us with a jolly manner and plenty of coarse jokes. We listened entranced to her husband's Saturday evening fun, and scanned her cheerful face for black eyes on Sunday morning. We dined at least twice a week at Nevern Square, and the rest of the time in Soho, or we lunched grandly at an exclusive little restaurant in Jermyn Street, drinking a very dark Munich beer and eating nothing but an enormous quantity of the best hors d'œuvre in London. There was no housekeeping to do at Grosvenor Road.

In the spring we went to Beech, Alton, where the Comptons had a wooden house. When he was a boy he and his mother had planted a great number of trees in an empty plot, and made a garden of it. Here the old family nurse, who grimly figures in *Sinister Street*, hovered about us and did what housekeeping there was to be done. I had been put on a diet of eggs, asparagus and digestive biscuits for alleged colitis. Monty followed it too. Nannie never wanted to see an egg again. We took them out hard-boiled for picnic walks in the beech woods and on the downs. Sometimes

in a green lane Monty would stop abruptly. He had caught the bright eye of a bird sitting on its nest in the thick hedge.

A dozen nightingales singing round the house kept us awake at nights.

At Lady Ham there had to be some semblance of housekeeping. Local women came in and kept us clean and we had delicious food in glasses and tins from Frank Cooper in Oxford, as expensive as could be. We wrote on hand-made paper from Vincent's, identical with that used by His Majesty King Edward VII. Books poured in from Parker's and Blackwell's. The Oxford tradesmen, always obliging, were in extra good form because Edward had lent us four hundred pounds of my patrimony, which had settled all Monty's debts. So that it was absolutely necessary to warm up all those accounts again, and keep the pot boiling. I had good credit with London drapery shops too, so, though we had no money to speak of, we showed no signs of poverty.

A grand piano was installed in the bower at Lady Ham, and the complete set of Clara Schumann's edition of her husband's piano works and a volume of Schubert bound in different coloured linens arrived from Parker's. While I struggled with the *Carnival Suite*, Monty sat in a blue grandfather chair biting his nails and polishing poems to add to the collection which was already going the rounds of the publishers. It was then that he developed the habit of writing to music, and until he discovered the gramophone I always played for him. Schumann, Schubert's Waltzes, Beethoven's Sonatas and the Symphonies in a piano arrangement, Brahms, later Puccini, especially *Bohème*; later still, after he came back from the war, piano

scores of all Verdi's operas were ordered from Milan (this was when we lived in Capri). I was snobbish enough to despise them, but I had not then heard Claudia Muzio sing Violetta in Milan with Toscanini conducting as no one else can conduct *Traviata*, nor heard Mariano Stabile as Falstaff in Naples and Salzburg. The scores were not pianistically effective, and, indeed, why should they be? But Monty hummed the airs, which he had been hearing in Athens, and pretended to be satisfied. That was the end of my playing for him, for he soon went to Herm and the gramophone era began.

Christopher, Monty and I were together at Lady Ham. They were now the sole owners of the estate, and the only way to run it was to let it at every opportunity. When our tenants took possession that summer there were bowls of sweet peas in every room, but probably not enough pans in the kitchen.

Monty had a great deal of work on hand; not only two plays for his father, and his poetry, but a dramatisation of H. G. Wells's *Kipps*. Mr. Wells was surprised and delighted by the scenario which Monty submitted to him, and, when the play was finished, appeared to be even more surprised and delighted. But it was never produced.

The play Monty had promised was finished in time for his father's birthday in January, 1906, but it was not produced till the next year. It was an eighteenth-century highwayman romance and was called *The Gentleman in Grey*. He read it to the company in Leicester.

Roars of laughter and everybody pleased with their parts. . . . It will amuse you to hear that



in the bills for West Hartlepool I am announced as a native of that place!

Monty was with the company again when the play was produced at Aberdeen, and I joined them at Edinburgh for the most strenuous week yet experienced. Mr. Compton had lost his voice on the way from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, and Monty studied Charles Surface on Sunday, had one rehearsal, and played the part on Monday night. He then sat up all night studying Bob Acres for *The Rivals*, which he played on Tuesday after one rehearsal. He sat up the rest of the night studying Tony Lumpkin, but by Wednesday evening Mr. Compton was able to play. Monty had been brought up on these plays; otherwise his remarkable feat would have been impossible. Next day *The Gentleman in Grey* was produced for the first time in Edinburgh. Mr. Compton was popular throughout Scotland, and generally played to packed houses, but this night was a specially moving occasion. Father and son took their call together at the end and all was happiness and goodwill. The play went into the repertoire, and Monty had justified himself before his father. I was accepted with kindness and some shyness. We liked each other but were never quite at ease.

*The Gentleman in Grey* was by "Montagu Compton." This was the only instance of his dropping the family name of Mackenzie.

We travelled with the company to Glasgow, Greenock and Dundee. Monty's eldest sister, Viola, played one of the leading comedy parts, the maid Betty, and the most notable person in the company was the handsome Marie Hassall, mother of Rosie Boote, now Marchioness of Headfort. Marie played



6, NORTH STREET, WESTMINSTER



Mrs. Malaprop and such rôles. Her Rosie was our chief topic of conversation, and the pride and delight she had in her brilliant daughter were matched, I believe, by that daughter's devotion to her.

At Dundee our landlady was called Mrs. Fortune. She made our large bed with the help of a walking-stick. Here Monty was first attacked by the sciatica which was destined to be always an excruciating accompaniment to fatigue or worry.

We had given up Grosvenor Road in the autumn of 1906, and Cheyne Walk, the slum end, was now our London home. We had a large room lined with brown paper which absorbed a good deal of the light. But a large bow-window gave us Turner's view of the river. Two distinguished women painters were our neighbours. Below us was Ethel Walker, and at 128, across the road, lived, and still lives, Beatrice Bland. I never spoke to Ethel Walker except once when a friend of ours was making what I thought was an unnecessary noise on the piano and was wondering who would protest first, when Ethel Walker came angrily upstairs. I met her at the top, and was so quick to apologise that there was nothing for her to say, and she gave me one of the most charming smiles I have ever received and went downstairs again. She was tremendously busy and wisely did not bother with neighbours, so I never saw her smile again. We should perhaps not have met Beatrice Bland if she had not been at Burford one summer, painting magnificent landscapes, and giving us her amusing company between whiles.

While we were at Cheyne Walk Monty became ill. He had a terrible throat for three days, and I sat up all one night supporting his head because he could

not breathe. When his friend Dr. Wallace came the third morning he looked at his chest and said:

"Here, this man's got scarlet fever. He must go to hospital. I'll send an ambulance at once. You must stay here."

In less than an hour I saw Monty carried in a sack over a man's shoulder down the stairs, and I was left to spend the next twenty-four hours alone because no one might come near me. I was in a desperate state of apprehension, convinced that I should never see him again; he had seemed too ill for any possibility of recovery, and I made up my mind to a fearful night in that sadly deserted room.

In the flat below lived Mr. and Mrs. Unwin, connected with the publishing firm. We had heard him playing Mozart and occasionally we met on the stairs, but that was all. They found out about the scarlet fever and took pity on my loneliness. Mrs. Unwin came up and asked me to dine with them, disregarding the danger of infection, and by this kind action saving me from a long night of horror. Next morning our rooms were sealed and fumigated, and I moved to Nevern Square and lay in the bedroom where I had powdered my nose before our first dinner there, isolated from every one but Mrs. Compton, and being watched by Dr. Wallace for symptoms which did not appear.

For six weeks I drove every day to the West London Hospital and left fruit and flowers and anything else he asked for. When he was better he wanted toy soldiers and I bought battalions for fourpence half-penny the box at Gamage's. With these he and the only other man in hospital, who happened to be in the next bed, and a Cambridge man, fought great

battles on the floor of the ward, assisted by a crowd of slum children. For a long time he was "as weak as a bit of ribbon" after a very bad go of the fever with the usual rheumatic complications. The convalescent children swarmed and shrieked, and then one of them developed mumps, and another chicken-pox, which kept them all in the ward for another three weeks, more obstreperous than ever.

I hate bedpans. They're about as much use for what they're meant for—comfort—as a submarine would be. I'm thinking out a patent. I go yachting round the bed in mine.

You've no idea how rotten it is being here. I'm not fretting, only it *is* a test of one's patience. Prison must be awful, and you can't smoke there. I'll never forget. Please don't make any mistake about the tobacco. I'm craving for it. I could never give it up. John Cotton Medium. Order it at once and get it in a *tin* of half a pound, *not* two packets of 4oz. I'm so excited at the idea of smoking again.

I *am* looking forward to Burford. It's like escaping from a cloister. I think it would be nicer to see you at home. One is always fussed and self-conscious at a railway station. Don't tire yourself out before I come, I beg you. . . .

Just a note because I've promised to play tennis with one of the *doctors*! We've been forbidden to play with the night-nurses (!) because the charge nurse said we walked about surrounded by twenty-four the whole morning.

It was while I stayed at Nevern Square that Mrs. Compton and I became mother and daughter. Six weeks living together under such intimate and emotional circumstances supplied the acid test. It must be love or hate. We could have fought over the absent and suffering Monty whom we both adored. But she, whose devotion to her first-born was the kind that must be lit by jealousy, was quick to recognise and accept what was now proved to be a genuine thing.

It was full summer when he came home to Burford. The hospital sent a printed note that he was to sleep in socks for a week and must not play with other children's toys.

This was to be our last summer at Lady Ham.

I had married him as a poet, and a bit of a rebel. I knew he was a Jacobite, and had revived the White Rose dinners at Oxford. I had never taken the slightest interest in politics, and scarcely realised that he did, but we had not been married more than a month before I found myself swept into the excitement of the January 1906 election, when Conservative strongholds went down like ninepins before the Liberals, and we watched the results go up on white sheets in Parliament Square, cheering with the huge crowd at each Liberal gain. Radicalism was not so much in vogue at that time as Communism is nowadays among the young, but it was the last word to the intelligentsia, and, needless to say, Monty as a boy had been one of its earliest adherents. He was born with a passion for forlorn hopes and lost causes, and it was this that sent him canvassing for Mr. Masterman in West Ham, when the chance of the ultimate victory over Conservatism had seemed remote. Mr. Masterman got in; the battle was won; the hope was no longer forlorn, and

interest faded. How many corpses or sickly infants has Monty revived with his life-giving enthusiasm, and abandoned as soon as they could stand alone! It is the creative instinct, and the most unhappy manifestations of this aspect of his genius are the gardens he has made and deserted, mostly island gardens swept by storms, pestered by rabbits, coming to life almost by a series of miracles, growing to beauty and richness under his watchful and affectionate eye. They grow; they are achieved. Then he leaves them without a backward glance. He has created something, and moves on. . . .

I was prepared for almost any possibility in my marriage; neglect, abandonment, even divorce. With such a torch beside me, how could I guess which way its flame would sweep? I faced the unknown without fear and with some excitement, ready for anything but what was in fact to be the next turn in the kaleidoscope.

This was presaged in a letter to his mother:

I am in rather a tangle of mind at present, and am seriously thinking of being ordained next year. But I'll give the idea time to settle finally. . . . The ordination idea is not a new one, and has recurred more frequently each year of late.

Should I after all be a clergyman's wife?

I had seen photographs of Monty as a boy, wistful in a cotta, and had listened to tales of Kensit and his brawls in St. Cuthbert's Church, Philbeach Gardens. I knew, too, that Mrs. Compton was a deeply religious woman, and that there was as much piety in Monty's family as there was in mine. Experience had bred in



me a lack of religious practice. I was afraid of fanaticism, considering my grandfather and his suicide, and my own morbid tendency to mope in empty churches.

This totally unexpected development in Monty stunned me at first. But I decided that whether he were a priest or not he would always make life amusing, so when he proposed retiring to ponder the idea, I accepted the prospect undismayed. A suitable place was immediately found. Lady Ham was let, Cheyne Walk abandoned, and Cornwall was our next move.

Sandys Wason was perpetual curate of Cury and Gunwalloe. Monty had met him years ago when as a young priest he had appeared at Beech, wearing a cassock, a Romish hat and buckle shoes, and carrying a large turbot as an offering to Mrs. Compton.

He was pleased with Monty's idea of our going to Cury, and suggested that we should be paying guests at the Vicarage and that I should do the housekeeping. I accepted this alarming proposition with faith.

## A SONG OF PARTING

M.C.M.

My dear, the time has come to say  
Farewell to London town,  
Farewell to each familiar street,  
The rooms where we looked down  
Upon the people going by,  
The river flowing fast:  
The innumerable shine of lamps,  
The bridges and—our past.

Our past of London days and nights,  
When every night we dreamed

COMPTON MACKENZIE

Of Love and Art and Happiness,  
And every day, it seemed.  
Ah! little room, you held my life,  
In you I found my all;  
A white hand on the mantelpiece,  
A shadow on the wall.

My dear, what dinners we have had,  
What cigarettes and wine  
In faded corners of Soho,  
Your fingers touching mine!  
And now the time has come to say  
Farewell to London town;  
The prologue of our play is done,  
So ring the curtain down.

There lies a crowded life ahead,  
In field and sleepy lane,  
A fairer picture than we saw  
Framed in our window-pane.  
There'll be the stars on summer nights,  
The white moon through the trees,  
Moths, and the song of nightingale  
To float along the breeze.

And in the morning we shall see  
The swallows in the sun.  
And hear the cuckoo on the hill  
Welcome a day begun.  
And life will open like the rose  
For me, sweet, and for you,  
And on our life and on the rose  
How soft the falling dew.

So let us take this tranquil path,  
But drop a parting tear  
For town, whose greatest gift to us  
Was to be lovers here.

We arrived at Helston on October 1, drove five miles on a haunted-looking road with wild signposts pointing this way and that to fabulous destinations, and reached Cury Vicarage in the twilight. It was a square Victorian house in a fair-sized garden which sloped away southwards into a dell. Growing round the house I saw for the first time pink amaryllis with purple stalks; it was a still evening and there was a sweet autumn smell and a plague of daddy-longlegs. A nurse met us at the door. There had been illness in the house but now it was empty, and the Vicar had gone into retreat at Truro.

We waited three days for him, exploring in exquisite weather the enchanted coast, Gunwalloe Cove to Looe Pool. The house was pleasant, newly painted and papered, and our bedroom comfortably furnished. The Vicar had the smallest room in the house, facing East, with a hole in the ceiling over his bed. His study was for the moment the only living-room, and here we were sitting when he suddenly appeared after dark, with a spine of mud up his back, because it had begun to rain and his bicycle had no mudguard.

"Hallo, Monty. Bored to death? Do you play bridge?"

They sat down at once to two-handed bridge. I was glad they did this, for I was as nervous of the Vicar as he was of me. The evening passed very easily for us all.

If I had had any misgivings about life in a remote

country vicarage they soon vanished. It was at once obvious that entertainment would be the principal feature of existence. There was no order in the household except the early Mass which the Vicar said daily. Servants were almost out of the question, and a woman from the village was generally our only help. We had a strange married pair for a time, the Barkers. He was silent but for his peculiarly heavy tread, and she a faded beauty with a fleck of foam at the corner of her mouth from endless talking. But they passed on after two months. This was their limit, for they were doing a leisurely tour of the British Isles free of any expense whatever, and they had a desire to see Wales.

If this was housekeeping, I was content. No one fussed, and there were no rows. The kitchen would be full of amateur helpers while Sandys Wason, an inspired cook, prepared delicious meals in splendid disorder. At any hour of the night dinner might be ready, and Monty would sit in the study, detached from the racket, with a sheet of shiny foolscap in front of him, scribbling in pencil the first tentative chapters of the novel he thought he would make of *The Gentleman in Grey*. It was to be called *Curtain Wells*, and towards midnight he would read aloud what he had written about the "exquisite mob."

His poems had been privately printed by Blackwell of Oxford as no publisher would take the risk. Reviews were trickling in and being severely criticised by the author and Sandys Wason, who is a poet himself. They were favourable but not all as long and enthusiastic as we thought they should have been. *Curtain Wells* was regarded as an evening's entertainment after the day's work was done. The Church occupied most of Monty's energies, and he was soon lecturing as far

afield as Penzance and Polruan by Fowey, where Bernard Walke was curate. At Fowey he was caught by the amateur dramatic society, produced Shakespeare for them, with Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, and once played Hamlet himself.

In January 1908 he became a lay reader and soon afterwards was licensed to preach in church. He astonished the golfing visitors with his sermons at Gunwalloe.

"By Jove," I heard a young man say, "if that chap had any education he'd make his name as a preacher!"

Locally Gunwalloe was Monty's chosen field; it was not so chapel-bound as Cury, where the Vicar's daily Mass had a congregation of perhaps half a dozen, including the server. Cury was antagonistic to the Vicar's doctrine; he had actually been stoned (after dark) by late members of his congregation. Gunwalloe was quicker to appreciate the peculiar genius of Sandys Wason, and he had loyal friends there. The church was in Gunwalloe Cove about a mile and a half from the village and the same distance from Cury. Spring tides lapped the churchyard walls, and there was nothing between the church and the sea but a great grassy rock called the Castle.

Once in a storm a beautiful sailing ship was driven ashore not many yards from the church, and lay peacefully in the cove miraculously rescued from the sea which had tried to destroy her.

Most of our spare time was spent in the Cove; Sandys and Monty dug energetically among the rocks for pieces of eight but never found any. There was also Bob, the sheep-dog without a tail, from Burford, then about two years old. He was sent by himself from Lady Ham and I met him at the station. The platform

was empty except for an old lady seated on the ground with Bob's chain wound round her waist and Bob sitting beside her smiling apologetically. Somehow he had swept her off the bench to which the porter had tied him, and there they were, linked together.

This was the least tactful episode in the whole long life of a perfect dog whose manners and benevolence were only matched by his humour and devotion. Another beast joined us at Cury, and that was Edward the pony who suddenly appeared with an old jingle driven by Monty from Helston fair. A slow old pony he seemed, but after a few months of high feeding, clipping and grooming, he became young, swift and ambitious. Everything must be passed—even motor-cars—and it was often hard to hold him.

Monty's success was notably with children. In Lent he dashed about the country giving weekly talks to schools. "Hands up, any children who have heard a primrose grumble?" was a question in a talk on Contentment.

In the spring of 1908 we took a four-roomed cottage at Gunwalloe, "about the size of a walnut," thatched and full of fleas. Here he launched out on a Sunday school which shook the Chapel to its foundations. Like the Pied Piper he would set out for a walk, and soon he would be surrounded by village children. From the cottages they would come running, fighting for his hand as he led them to the cliffs or the seashore. His exciting attitude to such commonplaces as flowers and birds, and his story-telling gifts gave an enchantment to the lives of those children. They were in a new world, and it was not surprising that they all wanted to come to his Sunday school which, he wrote to his mother, was about as much like an ordinary

Sunday school as a pig to a pea. Each child was given a locked money-box, and into this Monty put various coloured counters each Sunday. No one but himself knew the significance of these counters, and not till the "Day of Judgment" which occurred about once a month, were the boxes opened and the truth revealed. It all depended on conduct, which was closely watched by him through the week. Yellow for jealousy, blue for a good deed, and so on. Soon the little room in the cottage was overflowing. Much too full, thought the Chapel, and there were severe penalties for their renegade children. The climax was a grand treat to Praa Sands which no one could resist. A large two-horse bus with a knife-board top was hired and paid for by Mrs. Compton, and some twenty children and half a dozen mothers drove off ecstatically for a glorious day with Monty and Father Wason. That day the sun shone, but another of our picnics was not so successful. Heavy rain came down upon us when we were beginning lunch in a field near the sea. We sheltered under a hedge, about fifteen of us. As we sat there, a dear little girl with a pigtail, a summer visitor, came up excitedly with her camera.

"Excuse me, but is it a shipwreck?"

In the cottage at Gunwalloe Monty finished the rough draft of his novel. He worked at night, when the children had gone to bed and the village was quiet.

We had now left Cury Vicarage and another house was in prospect, Rivière, fourteen miles from Gunwalloe on the Hayle estuary. A large square Georgian house surrounded by trees, with an acre of walled garden, a rookery, ten bedrooms and a cellar like a Gothic crypt. Monty's enthusiasm for this discovery of his brought his mother down to inspect. She was

to share it, and Christopher would come and live with us. The rent was only seventy pounds with rates and taxes; it was a bargain and would suit everybody. A holiday place for the girls, with tennis court and paddock, and behind the house the Towans<sup>1</sup> with the glorious long white beach of St. Ives Bay, only ten minutes walk away. Besides, I was going to have a baby and it was time we had a home of our own. Lady Ham was lost for ever in a long lease.

Mrs. Compton was infected with Monty's enthusiasm and Rivière was taken for seven years. The house was papered white throughout and a tiny stone-deaf woman called Miss Bates spent about three months making the curtains and chair covers. Woolbacked satin curtains for the downstairs rooms and shiny chintz for upstairs and all the chairs. The first year the house was full of Comptons. Fay, now fourteen, was taken from school to have a year without lessons. A chestnut mare, a donkey and cart and a bulldog were bought for her amusement. Mr. Compton came down for his holiday from tour in his first car, a Mercedes. He was financially interested in the production of *The Arcadians* at the Shaftesbury which seemed to be going to play to packed houses for ever, and there was an atmosphere of festivity about the opening scenes of Rivière. A corner of the huge cellars was stocked with champagne and other wines, Mrs. Compton rushed up to town and came back with presents for everybody, and Mr. Compton smoked more Corona Coronas than ever. The largest and most expensive gramophone procurable arrived from the Gramophone Company, with a splendid selection of records. The white label Sextet from *Lucia di Lammer-*

<sup>1</sup>Sand-hills.



moor with Sembrich, Caruso, Daddi, Journet, Scotti, and Severina; Caruso and Ancona in *Solenne in quest'ora*, from *Pescatore di Perle*; Caruso and Scotti in *Del tempio al limitar* from Verdi's *Forza del Destino*; Caruso in Tosti's *Ideale*; Destinn singing *Un bel di* from *Madame Butterfly*; Tetrizzini singing *Il Bacio*, Charles Capper whistling *Il Bacio*; Evan Williams in *Sound an Alarm* (Mr. Compton's favourite) and in *Come into the Garden, Maud*. Harry Lauder in *The Wedding of Lochie MacGraw* was the only light number, as far as I remember, and there were some rather furry orchestral records which were seldom played. This pleasant extravagant toy was played with for a short time and then forgotten, and it was more than ten years before Monty wanting to buy an Aeolian organ at the Aeolian Company in Bond Street, was shown a Vocalion gramophone instead, because the organs had gone out of fashion and there were no new rolls. Like his father before him he bought the gramophone and a large quantity of records. This laid the foundation of *The Gramophone*, the paper he started fourteen years ago, which is now circulating all over the world.

A smart dogcart was bought for Edward the pony, a little too big for him, but it suited the chestnut mare, and every week-end I drove Monty over to Gunwalloe; Bob the sheep-dog always went with us and spent the week-end calling on his friends. He had a regular routine beginning with breakfast at the Williams', who kept the only shop in Gunwalloe, and were our greatest friends there.

There was opulence at Rivière, but little money in Monty's pockets or mine. Now the novel was ready to go on its travels. Perhaps that would change our fortunes? It was packed up and sent off to John Murray,

the son of whose house had been at Oxford with Monty, and would see that special attention was paid to it. Its title was still *Curtain Wells*. John Murray sent it back in a fortnight. Their reader could not make head or tail of it, he said. Hutchinson's rejected it. Constable's kept it six months and then returned it. By this time all sorts of things had happened. Monty had decided that literature was not to be depended upon, and that gardening could be more profitable. Horticultural catalogues poured in, van-loads of shrubs swathed in matting and straw were excitedly unpacked. We were all sowing seeds in the walled garden. Cushion (*Oncocylus*) irises, which included that black iris *Susiana* which Edward had found at Stonehouse, a collection of *Nerines* (Guernsey lilies) which was unique, and a great procession of red hot poker of every shade of fire, from scarlet to white heat, Californian poppies and *cistus*—these were but decorations to the general scheme, which was *Bulbs for Profit*.

Before the bulb-planting season set in there had been a prospective pageant at Chester. Monty had to go up there to discuss the possibility of producing it. I wanted to have my baby at Helensbourne and went there at the end of May for June. Steinmann of Piccadilly supplied exquisite jaconets and trimmings which I attempted to make into small garments, but I succeeded best with scalloped flannel shawls which are as nearly fool-proof as any handiwork. Margaret came over a few days after I arrived with a box of baby clothes, which she had made for her own first-born, to lend me, and took up a sleeve at which I had been slaving for some weeks.

"It's beautifully done, darling, but you've sewn

the insertion inside out. How like you! At least I shouldn't say that——"

"Yes, you should," I admitted darkly.

Her own exquisite work was lying all over my bed. Ruth was there too, looking sad and strained, for she was only recovering from a serious illness, and it must have been almost more than she could bear to have her household upset by a perfectly gratuitous confinement.

As we handled the fine linen and lace a sword ran through me. Too soon, too soon. A month too soon. The baby clothes were swept away, the doctor called, and after an eternity of undrugged agony, the son was born, dead. Never again, I swore.

Hard on this upheaval came Christopher and his wife Alyce to stay at Helensbourne. Indecisions vanished before their competent grasp of a situation. Should Monty be sent for? Of course, at once, whether the Chester pageant should be lost for it or no. He arrived in the early morning, pale and tired; the Chester pageant faded out, and as soon as I was well enough we went to stay with Alyce and Christopher at The Hill, Witley.

After a month of luxury at The Hill life went on again, with a difference. At Rivière the bulb-planting began. Hundreds and hundreds of bulbs, including a Peter Barr daffodil, then costing thirty pounds, presented by an aunt. For the rest Mr. Compton financed the garden without much hope of ultimate profit, but withdrew the allowance he had so far been paying to Monty. The Compton family had evaporated by this time, Mrs. Compton to Nevern Square, Fay to a finishing school in Paris, and the rest on tour.

The novel, now in the hands of an agent, went off



FAY COMPTON AND ANTHONY



to Methuen's who after careful consideration suggested paying half the cost of publication. Nash then had it and turned it down. Then Melrose. It was getting pretty hopeless. No money coming in from anywhere. The garden could not begin to pay for a year.

Then in May 1910, when the death of King Edward had cast a further gloom on the prospects for art and literature that year, "a mysterious man called Secker" called at the agent's office, asked for *Curtain Wells* and walked out with it.

"I didn't quite know what to do," wrote the agent. "I hope he's all right."

Martin Secker was reading for Nash, and had highly recommended *Curtain Wells*, but a reader turned it down. When he inherited a legacy shortly afterwards he decided to become a publisher and to open his career with *Curtain Wells*.

Monty went up for the Temple Flower Show, and there they had their first interview. The contract was signed before he came back to Rivière, and the name of the book was ultimately changed to *The Passionate Elopement*. The publication could not be until next year. Still no money.

Hall Caine was going to produce a play in London called *The Bishop's Son* and wanted Monty to play a part in it. In May of 1910 he went to the Isle of Man and stayed with him.

"The interview with Hall Caine," he wrote to me, "more or less settles us in town for the autumn. . . . I've only one scene. I die at the end of it, having been wrecked on the coast of Man. I am a Roman priest."

So it was to be the stage after all! Gunwalloe was given up, Rivière closed with caretakers for house and garden, and in October 1910 we moved into the Muir-

head Bones' flat at 28 Church Row, Hampstead. One lovely room with double doors and an improvised kitchen was the flat. The panelled walls were painted white; a bow window looked South over trees to the heath. The Bones were perfect landlords. We paid four pounds a month, including gas and electric light, including also a Corot on the wall, some Augustus John drawings and other priceless things which most people would have packed away.

Rehearsals of *The Bishop's Son* had begun. Elaine Inescourt and Bransby Williams played leading parts. It was a very bad play. Monty was ill with influenza throughout rehearsals, and I left him in bed one morning to go shopping in Heath Street. As I came out of the greengrocer's shop opposite 28 Church Row, I was ferociously attacked by the greengrocer's horse which was standing unattended outside. He lifted me twice off the ground, his powerful teeth firmly planted in my left upper arm. I screamed and then became momentarily unconscious. By the time I reached the ground a second time a crowd had collected and I was rescued before he got me down to savage me.

I was helped up to the flat followed by a crowd of excited women who thought I was just going into the first available doorway and wanted to see what happened next. The room was cleared by the girl who helped me up. She turned out to be a nurse in mufti, engaged with an elderly gentleman the details of whose case gave us a good deal of ribald amusement later on, for she came every day to dress my arm. . . .

I put my head in at the folding door.

"I've been bitten by a horse."

"I thought it sounded like you screaming," said Monty.

He was feeling too ill to deal with the situation, so I shut the door again, and Nurse cut the sleeve off my arm and found the muscle wrenched, though the skin, strangely enough, was not broken. But it was a bad arm and crippled me for weeks. The greengrocer had a heart attack, so we did not press damages upon him. The only result on his side was that the horse was thereafter seen wearing a muzzle with a very sulky look.

I blame the enormous hats that were in vogue then, and my own carelessness in crossing too near him. I was wearing a hobble skirt too, which he may have disliked. It was a shock to my sentimentality and a lesson never to pass in front of a standing horse in the street.

*The Bishop's Son* was a failure and only ran a week. What next?



## CHAPTER SIX

### CARNIVAL

SHIEL BARRY played a fisherman in *The Bishop's Son*. He was a handsome and charming boy; with his blue jersey and fair hair he is the most enduring memory of that short-lived play.

"He's quite the nicest thing I've met for a long time," wrote Monty, "and such a good actor."

H. G. Pélissier was going to do a revue for the Alhambra Theatre, and Shiel was convinced that Monty was the man to write the lyrics. At this time the Follies were at the peak of their popularity and were established all the year round at the Apollo. Pélissier was a big figure in every sense of the word, a powerful factor in the lighter side of stage life. On the last night of *The Bishop's Son* Shiel asked Monty to come and meet Pélissier at Verrey's. Monty had dragged himself down to the theatre all through the week, and by Saturday his throat was closing up and he was preparing hopefully for a week-end in bed. Most people would have taken it, but he appeared at Verrey's pale and almost speechless. Pélissier's great eyes brooded over him.

"The trouble is I must have those lyrics by Monday afternoon."

On Monday afternoon Monty turned up at the Apollo, with the lyrics. He had worked all the week-end, in and out of bed.

"It seems to me," said Pélissier, "that you're the man I've been looking for."

Now the world changed for us. When Monty was not at the Alhambra rehearsing the revue, we were spending long exhausting week-ends at Pélissier's home in Finchley, where huge parties of friends and acquaintances poured in throughout Sunday, from champagne at eleven o'clock in the morning to midnight. The guests, stuffed with food and drink, staggered out into the garden after lunch for tennis or easy-chairs until an immense tea was ready in the drawing-room. A cold but generous supper tapering off into sandwiches and whisky wound up the day. Harry Pélissier was generally closeted with Monty or Hermann Finck for most of the day discussing the revue or the Follies show, but he would preside at meals, sometimes in magnificent form, sometimes like a tired baby, his long lashes drooping over his great dark blue eyes, and he occasionally played a perspiring game of tennis. The legend that the Follies were a happy family living in a black and white house with bobbles on the furniture and jokes from morning to night was not so far-fetched as most legends of the kind. There were always some Follies at Finchley on Sundays, and there was certainly a remarkable camaraderie in their private lives which did not belie the spirit of amity which so delighted their audiences.

One Sunday afternoon a perfectly strange man who had wandered in with two ladies for tea was talking about China, and I asked him how many years he had been out there. As he seemed to be counting on his fingers, I waited at first without apprehension for his answer, but it was soon apparent that something was wrong and he had an epileptic fit there and then. The ladies were vague as to where his relations could be found. The house was in a turmoil, and a doctor sent

for. Before he arrived the guest had recovered and was walking round the garden, Harry following him anxiously with a bottle of aspirin and a glass of water.

"Don't you think you'd better have one?"

"Why on earth should I have an aspirin? I'm perfectly well, thank you. Never felt better in my life."

It was hard to realise the epileptic's utter unconsciousness of the commotion he had made in the household, and Harry regarded him with perplexity for the rest of his visit, the aspirin in his pocket ready for emergencies.

28 Church Row now became a centre of almost perpetual excitement, and it was not only Pélissier and the Alhambra that made it so. It was the Turf. Every day except Sunday and Monday wires were coming in and being sent off. The wires came from those gentlemen who spent their dawns concealed behind hedges watching the early morning gallops of likely horses. Five racing papers including *Wiltshire Opinion* and *Form in a Nutshell* were taken in and carefully studied. It was not long before Monty knew the form of most of the horses and all the jockeys of any note. He had an almost infallible second-favourite system. This was his notion of supplementing our income, and for nearly a year it was successful. A bad bit of welshing in September 1911 over a horse called Pillo which he backed heavily because he found two pills under his pillow, and which won at 8 to 1, ended his interest in the turf.

Pélissier's big Silent Knight Daimler used to call for Monty most days and take him off to the Alhambra. The revue was called *All Change Here*. It made unusual demands on the ladies of the ballet, who had not only to dance, but to sing and act. Monty selected the most

likely girls and created an excellent chorus. His effect on the ladies of the ballet can be judged by this extract from a letter I wrote to Mrs. Compton after the first night of the revue.

There were tremendous calls for author at the end. Pélissier took two calls. The management wouldn't allow Monty to go on. But a sweet thing happened. About thirty ladies of the ballet got hold of Monty, and not in fun, but like furies, tried to force him on to the stage. He had to cling to ladders and things to stop it. He was nearly torn to pieces. They simply adore him, and every one says that no one has ever been able to make the ballet do so much with no grumbling and everything going smoothly the whole time.

"They simply adored him," and out of that revue came his second book, *Carnival*.

*All Change Here* ran for about three months, and during the run Martin Secker published *The Passionate Elopement* on the author's birthday, January 17th, 1911. His faith in it was abundantly justified. It was the foundation-stone on which an original and highly selective business was laid. Secker was the pioneer of elegant Twentieth Century publishing which has been widely imitated. His title pages were conceived with passion; imagination and restraint guided his choice of types and bindings.

The success of *The Passionate Elopement* brought the publishers round Monty like flies round jam. There was no written contract with Secker, but a verbal promise which naturally Monty was determined to keep in the face of all temptation. The new book,

the life of a ballet girl, was already begun at Church Row while the Alhambra revue was on, but we were at Rivière again when I first met Martin Secker. The only servant in the house at this time was the caretaker Mrs. Budge, a protégée of Mrs. Compton's, whose cheerful disposition battled with a perpetual hang-over.

"Nice fine morning, m'm!" she would say, stunning us with a blast of sour breath as she put down our morning tea. "Nice fine morning! Raining hard now, but it's sure to clear. Come on, Bob, out you come for your morning run, you old rascal!" She trod heavily in felt shoes, which sounded, Monty said, as though she were walking on turbot. She had a husband, a fine soldierly man with a beard who spent his time either standing at attention or at ease, enveloped in a calm that no household upheaval could disturb.

Martin Secker was a shy young man of about twenty-five. If a weapon was needed to break the ice on the first evening of his stay, Mrs. Budge supplied it. When he sipped his whisky-and-soda he gave a scarcely perceptible start and put it down.

"Too strong?"

"No—no thank you. No—not at all."

Monty helped himself.

"Good god, what on earth is this?"

"I thought it a little strange," admitted Martin, blushing.

Mrs. Budge was at once dealt with outside. What had she done to the whisky? Oh, well to tell the truth, yes—well—she *had* had a drop of it, and so as not to worry us she had filled the decanter up with beer, not thinking it would be noticed. It was all done for the best.

We were not long at Rivière that spring of 1911, for Pélissier demanded Monty's presence continually. There were potted plays to be done for the Follies which involved constant lunches and week-ends at Brighton or Margate. The Muirhead Bones had come back to their flat in Church Row, and we had no home but Nevern Square. Why not a flat all together in the West End? suggested Harry. By this time we were both fond of him; he was a great generous baby, lavish with wrist-watches and kind-hearted gestures. To share a flat with him would be amusing. 45 Pall Mall was done throughout by Maples. A gorgeous peacock wallpaper went up in Harry's bedroom. The peacocks were about six foot long, and the room about eighteen foot square.

Scarcely were the carpets down and the curtains up when my outraged family sent in an ultimatum through Edward, as the only person who had the right to interfere. This project of a joint flat with Pélissier must be abandoned. In such an inappropriate part of London for a woman, surrounded by men's clubs, and what would look like a *ménage à trois*, even if it wasn't! Edward was pressed chiefly by the elder members of the family, who disapproved of my being "mixed up" with a popular actor who was not, to their minds, in the first rank of the profession.

It had never occurred to me that the *ménage* would be considered anything except slightly crazy and I had so long abandoned whatever regard I had ever had for appearances that my family's sudden attack of conscience on my behalf surprised and irritated me. I replied to Edward indignantly, stressing dirty minds and snobbery which brought from him a reply of touching humility:

I have absolute faith in you and Monty, always have had, and that being so I ought not to have given you even a suspicion that I have not. I was thinking merely of a possible scandal if I ever gave the subject a proper amount of thinking. . . . My physical deafness is constantly shutting me out from information on various matters. . . . I live in a circumscribed world. You should have enlightened me, darling Faith, about the *ménage* in Pall Mall.

But peacock wallpapers are not put up for nothing. That *ménage* in Pall Mall was doomed from the start. It was high summer when we went in, and the smell of newness was overpowering. New mattresses; new sheets; new blankets; each with its own peculiar emanation. And the sun poured in.

Now Fay was coming home from her Paris finishing school. She was sixteen and Mr. Compton was full of confidence in her future. She was exquisitely fresh and lovely; her face was still a baby face but her violet eyes were not baby's eyes. She had a fatal quality, something that most others have not. She would be a problem, and none the less so because she would certainly be a success. But so attractive a child launched so early on the stage . . . ?

"Why not let Fay join the Follies?" suggested Monty.

Why not? An audition would be easy to arrange. Harry was eager to do anything that would please Monty. It would be a good start for little Fay in such a pleasant atmosphere as the Follies.

On a piping hot day in June Fay and I went down to the theatre with a roll of music, and on the empty

stage she sang two songs to my accompaniment. Harry and Monty were in the stalls.

We all lunched together afterwards, and later in the flat Harry said to me:

"What am I to do about it? I've fallen in love with Fay! I've fallen in love with Fay!"

"Who wouldn't?" was the obvious reply. And as to what he could do about it, well, there wasn't much, I thought, but I didn't say so.

Fay would become a Folly of course, and Harry would recover from this passing infatuation of a man of thirty-eight for a girl of sixteen. So one hoped. But the summer got hotter and hotter, and Harry more ardent as the temperature rose.

Fay, after feverish week-ends which we shared at Finchley, took refuge at Rivière which was the family centre again. But only a few days elapsed before Harry and I were motoring down to Cornwall. Through the New Forest we went at night, the cool green of the trees above us flood-lit by our headlights. All the time Harry talked about Fay.

"Whatever I'm doing, wherever I am, there she is, sitting at the back of my mind. Fay! Fay! Will she have me? Do you think she will marry me?"

And there was Fay at Rivière, looking much the same as two years ago when she was there with her bulldog and her donkey, only now her bright hair was twisted into a grown-up knot. Harry amused her tremendously. He was in great spirits and won the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Compton. Such a dear good fellow.

Back to town, all of us. Now in August the heat was terrific.

"I can't stand this. We'll go to Margate. Fay



too," said Harry. Monty would join us later. In the open car we set out. The sky was a copper dome; there was not a breath of air. Harry sat in front with a large bottle of eau-de-Cologne which he sprinkled continually on his head, making the coarse pepper-and-salt hair stand up like burnt grass.

Margate was little better. Sea breezes could not cool the red-hot esplanades and hotels after weeks of baking. Fay was pale and tired when we arrived and soon she was in agonies of pain with one of her chronic tummy-aches (later it turned out that her appendix was responsible).

Harry was in a wild state, and suddenly "took against" me as though I were responsible for her illness. She always had chlorodyne for these attacks and we sent out for some. While I was pouring it out for her drop by drop Harry came into the room.

"What are you doing?" he shouted.

"Pouring out Fay's chlorodyne."

"No you don't." He rushed at me and seized the bottle. "I'll do this, thank you very much."

I let him do it and decided to go back to town, wiring Monty to meet me. As soon as I knew that Fay was better and that another chaperon was on her way down I left. London was still under a copper dome. But Monty met me at Victoria, the only man in London who had the sense to be dressed entirely in white.

We shook the hot dust of Pall Mall from our feet and went down to Rivière. Monty still wrote for the Follies because he was under contract, but that was the end, or nearly the end of Pélissier for us. Only rumours reached us, and we knew that he was going

to marry Fay. With that Margate afternoon still an ineffaceable memory, I couldn't feel that he would be an ideal person to live with, but hoped for Fay's sake that she would manage not to irritate him as I had done.

Lazy acquiescence is a feature of my character which has its uses but in this case was wholly deplorable. My fatal habit of never taking up a definite attitude was to blame. I should have said at once: I will have nothing to do with this. Instead, I weakly joined in his pursuit of her, at his side in the impetuous journey to Cornwall, and abetting him in the Margate adventure, while my reason resented it. Harry was delightful company, but I didn't think on various counts that he was marriageable. I had adored Fay from the moment I first saw her with Katie in the doorway of that room at Nevern Square. I had loved them both immediately and for ever, but Fay produced in me the emotion one feels before a great picture or an entrancing landscape.

*Carnival* now absorbed our days and nights. Monty wrote and I played in the bower, which was the nicest room in the house in a small wing of its own. When he had finished writing for the night he would add something to the cathedral or guildhall he was building in a corner of the room with German stone bricks. Martin Secker was now a friend and frequent visitor, and Nelly, the baby adopted by Lily at Stonehouse, was with us learning to be a secretary. Weaver of fantasies, child of many inventions, she is now a novelist, writing as Helen Eastwood several books a year, and her own story is a book that has yet to be written. A difficult, almost an impossible, girl, the despair of my family who cannot be blamed because

they didn't understand her, she was sent to us at the age of eighteen. She stayed, with intervals, for ten years, till she married.

Now we had no home in London except Nevern Square, and we were there in January 1912 when *Carnival* was published. It came out on Monty's birthday, the 17th, a black morning with buckets of rain. He had been in pain all night. *The Times Literary Supplement* was brought to us with our breakfast. Monty searched the paper with diminishing excitement.

"Nothing."

"Too soon perhaps. Too much to expect——"

"Oh, no. Here it is."

Five lines among the "also rans."

"That's the end. They'll all follow *The Times*. The book's a failure."

We sank into a deep depression, and the rain splashed on the window ledge outside.

But they didn't follow *The Times*. In a week the book was the talk of the town. It was headline and front-page news in nearly all the London papers. Monty had arrived. An invitation from a famous London hostess to have lunch at the Ritz was as sure an indication as a reliable weather vane. He did not know the famous London hostess and did not lunch with her but the propitious sign was none the less gratifying.

Now that the future was assured we must have a house in London of our own, and No. 6 North Street, Westminster, dropped into our laps. This lovely old row of Tudor cottages with its courtyard and fig-tree lay at the back of North Street, on the south side. There were three tiny staircases, three front doors, a magnificent eighteenth-century ceiling in the dining-

room and another less elaborate in the bathroom which must once have been an entrance hall, for an ancient set of stone steps led up to it from outside. Three ghosts, according to Maurice Baring who had once shared it with Hilaire Belloc, enhanced the charm of the place, a harlequin, a singing lady and a masked belle from Vauxhall. We never saw or heard them, but there was a peculiarly cheerful air about the place though it did face entirely north.

There was a small black and gold room like a tea-caddy leading out of the drawing-room, which Monty made his study. The rest of the house was panelled. Originally farm cottages, it had been turned into a house in the eighteenth century for Lord North's mistress.

"A wonderful house for a *favorita*!" remarked a Spanish gentleman when we showed him over the snug little nest with its many exits.

We took it over from Captain Gerard Tharp, who left us the most perfect curtains ever conceived for a small house which got little sun. They were a soft apricot fabric which never wore out and scarcely faded, though we took them to Capri later on and for ten years they hung in Casa Solitaria. In North Street they filled the rooms with genial warmth night and day.

Life was more amusing than ever. Lunch and dinner parties, but never "Society" for either of us. We had two pretty maids, Emily and Alice. Bob was with us, and soon learnt his way down Victoria Street where he was often seen bundling along to call on his favourite butcher. Monty's amusements were still simple. Sometimes I would wake up in the small hours and find him leaning over the bed with a paper

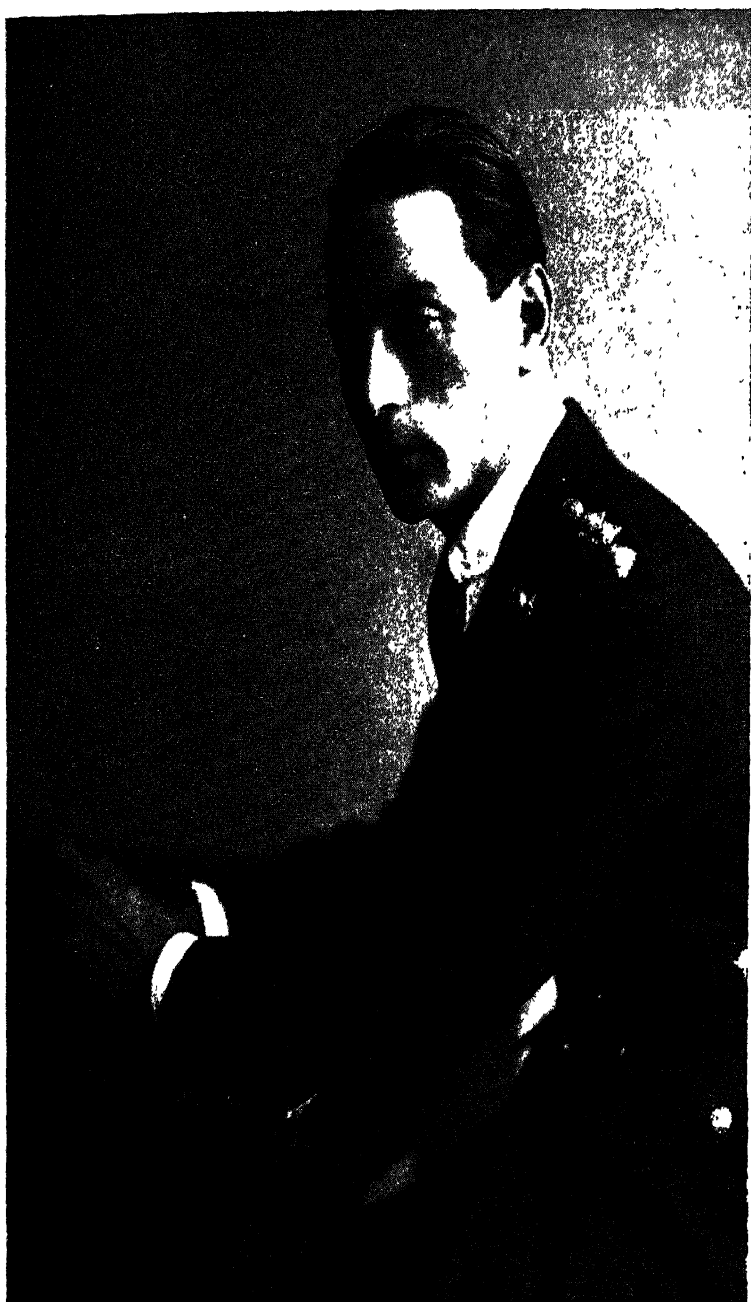
cap on his head and a harlequin's wand in his hand. Dancing with the ladies of the ballet at some gay party. This was fun, so why not?

As a contrast, there was that amusing lunch party at Douglas Ainslie's in Richmond. Interesting people there, including Ada Leverson. Then we started to walk to Richmond Station. A long walk through residential streets of a summer afternoon somnolence only to be compared to the graveyard. In the middle of an apparently endless road, a ferocious attack of sciatica suddenly struck Monty to earth. He was in such pain that sweat poured from his forehead. There was nothing in sight. Not a cab, not a sign of life. I shall never forget that endless walk. Each step was a separate agony, and by the time we did reach the station he was absolutely dead beat. This fearful attack brought about the final decision to install an invalid chair in the tea-caddy room, and here he wrote the first chapters of *Sinister Street*.

But this work was soon interrupted. William Brady wanted to produce *Carnival* as a play for his wife Grace George in America. Monty must dramatise it and go out and produce it. He did both. Sailed on the *St. Louis* in September 1912 and was fascinated by New York.

New York seems to me like living in a set piece at a Brock's Benefit, and it is certainly amazingly romantic. Good God! Why haven't they produced a great poet here? I can't understand. The inspiration should be tremendous.

This hotel is astonishing. My bedroom has a bathroom, a lavatory, a luggage-room. There is



COMPTON MACKENZIE IN 1915



a kitchen on every floor. In fact—there are no hotels in England.

He was well; having a splendid time; not a trace of neuritis. If the play *Carnival* was a success we would stay in America. I must come out for the New York production anyway, and then we should see. . . . There was no one to play Maurice, the hero of *Carnival*, so there was nothing for it but to play the part himself. Grace George was a perfect Jenny. They opened at Toronto and then Detroit and Montreal. The reception of the play was so-so, baffling. They didn't seem to get it somehow. Anyway I must come out in January. He had plenty of money coming in, for the magazines were paying him big prices for short stories and a serial called *Metropolitan Nights* for the Metropolitan.

I spent the three months of his absence playing bridge with rich Americans in rooms where ospreys seemed to sway like corn in the wind and diamonds were thick as stars. The reason for this complete change of environment was the presence at 6 North Street of a gay and delightful woman, Tessie Brennan, whose enormous circle of friends kept her in a continual whirl of diversions. I was gladly caught up in it, and had scarcely time to miss the absent Monty after a week or two of extreme melancholy. If it was not bridge it was a party of some sort. "What kind of a party?" was Tessie's watchword. Once we wandered into a very solemn affair after going to see *Within the Law* at the Haymarket. Miss Lillah MacCarthy was there and Mr. W. B. Yeats too. I found myself sitting next to Miss MacCarthy.

"I've just been to *Within the Law*. So exciting. Have you seen it?"



"No."

She shuddered and turned away.

"But to continue . . ." said some one, and Mr. Yeats began again from where he left off when we made our ill-timed entrance.

It was a fairy tale, I think; anyhow something twilit and very long. Tessie and I were not in the mood. Neither of us had ever been to a party where people read their own work aloud to a breathless audience, but there was no excuse for my making an outrageously frivolous remark when the reader paused.

The effect was dramatic. Mr. Yeats leapt to his feet and rushed from the flat leaving his straw boater on the hall table and taking with him a young man who had been (literally) sitting at his feet all the evening. Neither was seen again that night. I should have been turned out, but the party went on with a regrettable change of tone for several hours.

At another party a terrific young man appeared from somewhere and after a good deal of coyness consented to dance for us. An hour later he leapt into the centre of the floor painted from head to foot and wearing a small leopard skin. He described the dance as he went along.

"Now I garther the spring flowers. See how the birds flit past! . . . Now the doo is falling . . ."

At this point one of the guests was led out in hysterics. Her shrieks of laughter were plainly heard throughout the dance which ended with a phrenetic prostration before the god of something, most probably Priapus, but that was not quite clear.

The host at this party mixed drinks himself with the air of a poisoner. One hand slyly hid what the other was doing, and the result was a succession of exhilarat-

ing potions which might well unbalance one's sense of values. This is probably why that young dancer went back to America with a letter of introduction in his pocket, and actually turned up while Monty was at breakfast one morning before my sobered letter of warning could reach him.

What on earth was that you sent me? Don't do it again. I nearly got turned out of the hotel.

Just as well perhaps that early January saw me launched once more on an Atlantic voyage, this time on U.S.M.S. *St. Paul*. Tessie sailed the same week on the *Carmania*. She was going to New York on business. We both got into heavy weather, and my stewardess went up into the bows to watch the storm.

She came back in good spirits.

"Wonderful the way the little *St. Paul* takes this weather. She doesn't go *through* the waves. She just climbs on to the top of them and comes down ever so cutely on the other side. Up and down, up and down."

"I thought she did," I sighed.

But I had a good state-room with a bath and I was thrilled by the prospect of New York and Monty. And there was a trousseau of new clothes, made by Nigel, one of the first young Englishmen to take dressmaking seriously, and beautifully packed by Mrs. Compton, whose experience with valuable wardrobes made her an expert. I anticipated a pretty gay time in New York, and searched the quay eagerly for Monty when we docked. No sign of him. I was standing forlornly by letter M while my luggage was being turned inside out, when Francis, his brother, appeared.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry I'm late. It's rotten bad luck but Monty's in bed. He asked me to come and bring you along."

The play was finished and he had been down a week with violent sciatica. The doctor was dosing him now with morphia injections which made him sick but stunned the pain. He looked ghastly, and I nearly burst into tears.

"I'm so glad you've come," he said with a wan smile.

For six weeks we were at the Flanders Hotel and he was in bed most of the time. A few parties, but not very amusing ones, between the attacks. And a *Metropolitan Nights* story to be written every week. For this he would get up and sit supported by as many cushions as we could find. In our sitting-room was an engraving of the Isle of Capri.

"That's the place Norman Douglas was talking about. It looks rather attractive."

Norman Douglas had been to lunch with us at North Street, but we didn't know him very well then.

The presence at the Flanders of Tessie with her gay intelligent friendliness was one of the principal solaces of this rather disappointing time. Her admirable determination never to be bored did not prevent her from spending a good part of the day with me and lunching at Rector's, while Monty was in bed. Certainly, Rector's was not dull, and women could smoke. Stars lunched there always, and the brightest was Gaby Deslys, who was playing at the Winter Gardens with Harry Pilcer and doing the Gaby Glide. At the back of her naughty doll's eyes was something that might account for those pilgrimages that the people of the Midi still make to her tomb at Marseilles every year.

Once Harry Pilcer came across and spoke to us, as Tessie knew him, and after a very few minutes' conversation said:

"I must get back to Gaby or she will kill me!"

Gaby was madly in love, and at the Winter Gardens they danced *con amore*. All she knew about the art was taught her by Pilcer, who was a first-rate and very attractive dancer.

A radium treatment was tried for Monty's sciatica. But nothing seemed to help him much, and at last it was decided that a warm climate was essential, and that he must never spend the winter in England. We were given a choice: California or Italy.

Italy!

We sailed at the end of March for Naples and took the boat to Sorrento, which swarmed with tourists. We stayed at a second-class hotel, the Lorelei, on the edge of the tufa cliff. There before us was the Bay of Naples, which had been misted over when we landed. And there was the island of Capri stretched out against the skyline, a lovely shape.

"We might spend a week-end at Capri when we've seen the coast round here," said Monty.

We were tourists, enraptured like every other tourist by the first sight of Italy's glory. Guides took us driving round the sights, branches of ripe oranges were brought to our rooms by radiant serving-maids, bunches of flowers were thrown into our laps as we drove along; "Santa Lucia" had been sung to the twanging of guitars under our balcony at Naples, and "O Sole Mio" and "Torna a Surriento" after dinner at Sorrento. To all obvious tourist lures we fell willing victims.

But we began looking for a house. We inspected

dusty pink-washed villas with huge rooms, whose majolica-tiled floors were usually bare of anything except perhaps a vast worm-eaten wardrobe or a "commode" falling quietly to pieces, the haunt of silver-fish, and probably bugs. There were no drains or bathrooms, but plenty of rich smells.

"I wish we could find a villa that didn't have the owner living underneath. There's always a vineyard or orange grove that wants looking after. I should like to find something small with a garden and no *contadini*."

We penetrated as far as Massa on the Sorrentine peninsula and walked one hot day to the lighthouse on that lizard-shaped point. Deliciously scented wild sweet peas trailed along our path. We might have wandered about that entrancing country for the rest of the spring if Norman Douglas had not sent us some letters of introduction to people in Capri which whetted our curiosity.

So we sailed over with suitcases for a week-end, and stayed at the Faraglioni. Signor Ferraro was the *padrone*, and his wife and children helped him to run the pension. Good food, reasonable comfort and delightful friendliness were characteristics of this little hotel. It was full of ecstatic Germans and British wild-flower enthusiasts who cluttered their bedrooms with jam-pots of lithospermum, anemones, orchids and asphodel. We were so perfectly happy immediately that we sent across for our trunks before we had explored Capri.

But there was no need for that. Capri engaged us from the moment we landed. It was, for me at least, falling in love, irrevocably. Its magic sank into my heart.

One of Norman Douglas's letters was to Kate and Saidee Wolcott-Perry, the passionate old American ladies who are the heroines of *Vestal Fire*.<sup>1</sup> Their villa on the Grande Marina was built for gaiety: salons and loggias blazed with fairy lamps; long pergolas were lit by coloured bunches of grapes among the vines. Till dawn they would speed the dancers, ply the band with wine, Kate fanning herself vigorously, her tall figure held upright in its lace dress till the last guest went.

"Oh, my! How I hate to have folks go!"

Saidee, more sober and ten years younger, a mere sixty-five, went quietly among her friends seeing to food and drink, her steadfast eyes fixed often on their hero, their Count Jack, who, after a humiliating exile from Capri, was allowed back this summer at his remote villa beyond the ruins of Tiberius's palace. For him these festas! And for him the smashing up of half their friendships on the island. Who would not meet Count Jack need not come to the Villa Torricella.

When he had first appeared, a debonair young man with lots of money, every one had gone to his parties until it came out that he had been imprisoned in France for his inconvenient but not unusual tastes. Now he preached opium, and his den was furnished with luxurious couches and a wonderful collection of pipes. It was open occasionally to the ladies who would sometimes be sick afterwards on his marble staircase outside. It was his gospel that summer, and he poured it into my ear all through a long lunch at the Wolcott-Perrys. I felt that at present Capri was as much as I could stand, so I didn't take his advice. Two years later he had changed his tune.

<sup>1</sup>By Compton Mackenzie.

"Beware of opium and all drugs! It is true what they say, that one becomes a slave."

It was true in his case, and he eventually died of an overdose of cocaine. Whatever his vices may have been, nothing made him more socially impossible than his conversation, which was pretentious and never lit by a gleam of humour. I remember a party at his villa from which I came away in a daze of boredom, walking with John Ellingham Brooks, a gentle intellectual with the countenance of a saint, though he was not one.

"How can you bear Count Jack's nonsense?" I asked him.

"Oh, I just shut my ears, dear lady, I just shut my ears." He had the advantage of being slightly deaf.

As strangers on the island we did not have to take sides in the Count Jack schism. The most serious rival to the old ladies in the social racket was their fellow countryman, "Uncle" Charley Coleman, who was nearly as old as Miss Kate and just as lively. A splendid old dandy with his too picturesque white beard and bright waistcoats and determined air of Bohemia. His background was almost pure *cinquecento*. A string of small rooms smothered with tapestry and church vestments, crowded with uneasy little chairs and dark tables loaded with bric-à-brac preluded the big studio where once he used to paint. Pictures of pretty girls with amphorae on their heads going up marble steps, or coming down them, or grouped about a well; or pastels of Vesuvius which he saw from his windows, with the nymphs that his fancy conjured floating in roseate clouds. Just as well, perhaps, that the studio was now given up exclusively to jolly parties with lots of good red wine served by young maids with

ribbons in their hair who might have stepped out of the pictures that we didn't feel obliged to look at.

Uncle Charley was a he-man, a worshipper of what his generation called the fair sex, and he had no use for such phenomena as Count Jack. Leaning against the wall of his studio were large canvases sold or given in the good old days to the Wolcott-Perrys, scornfully returned without a word of explanation during the crisis. No half-measures from the old ladies. The cut direct and the salt of bitterness ruthlessly applied to the wound. There would soon be a voyage round the world with their idol, from which they would all three return with trunks full of treasures from China and Japan. What a wonderful companion Count Jack had been to them on that splendid adventure! They loved him more than ever. Then would come the war. Miss Kate waving flags and crying out for America to come in. Saidee watching with knitted brows the reaction of her beloved to the call to arms. And disillusion. The idol would totter and fall. Ruthlessly their old hands would bar and bolt the doors of the Torricella against him. In their darkened villa they would sit grimly, their world turned to dust and ashes, waiting for death. Saidee, who loved him most, would go first, and Kate, gallant and upright as ever, would sit silently gazing out to the Bay of Naples through the replica of a Torricella window that she had built into the tomb where Saidee lay in the English cemetery. And when she joined Saidee, it would not be long before Count Jack's elegant marble monument would be seen, only separated from them by the mortal remains of an Englishman of irreproachable normality who had died in Capri while on a short visit.



But now, in 1913, all was gaiety and the future was mercifully obscure. The easy cheerful life of Capri that spring was exactly right for Monty after the rigours of U.S.A. He began work again on *Sinister Street* in the *siesta* hours. The best of our time was given to expeditions, generally up Monte Solaro with a donkey in attendance, and lunch on the terrace of Citrella hermitage beneath which spreads the Bay of Naples, the Sorrentine peninsula and the Salernian coast, a fantastic panorama. Monty bought nearly the whole south side of Solaro, a range of wild uncultivated promontories and ridges under one of which was the green grotto, not so famous as the Blue but in a good light just as beautiful. Ventrosa was the name of this property, and all we did to it was to make paths through the thick *macchia* where paths had never been before. So that in this exploration there were constant excitements: the unveiling of a perfectly shaped arbutus tree which had been shrouded by drifts of rosemary, or the sudden bright vista through a green arch of a sapphire sea with one white sailing-boat set like a pearl.

The magic and secret beauty of Ventrosa was Monty's best gift to me. All through my years at Capri, after he had deserted it and I still lingered, Ventrosa and Citrella were my strength and comfort. Citrella was a small house near the hermitage, which Monty added to our possessions in 1917, with a good bit of land below it in the valley for cultivation. The paths on Ventrosa were always in the making, and the Citrella garden was full of bulbs. Whole days I would spend up there alone in a silence so intense that the whisper of a breeze in the scarce pine-trees was like a voice from heaven. But this was long, long

after spring, 1913, had become a pleasant but hardly credible memory.

While we were in Capri Mrs. Compton had swiftly evacuated 6 North Street for us. We never saw it again, and soon it was swept away altogether by hideous offices. We were to settle in Capri, and before we went back to England for the summer we had taken a villa, La Caterola, on the Tiberio side of the island where Norman Douglas had planted trees fourteen years before. It was the best place we could find but not ideal, as the house was damp and got too little sun.

*Sinister Street*, Volume I., was finished at Rivière that summer. Edward had accepted the dedication with pride and without misgivings, though he was aware that a copy of *Carnival* had been "put behind the fire" by a relative of his and mine. When the book was done Monty went off to stay with Max Beerbohm at Rapallo, and I to Nevern Square, where Harry Pélissier lay dying.

Fay's baby, Anthony, was born when she was seventeen, and before she had recovered from a serious confinement her appendix developed an abscess which had to be operated upon to save her life. No one knew how she survived this ghastly accumulation of ills, and the pathos of her situation was an excuse for healing the breach with Harry which, because it involved her, had been a specially unhappy one. We had been abroad so much that we had hardly seen them since we made friends again at North Street, but now in August, 1913, Harry was occupying the library on the ground floor at Nevern Square, while Fay and I shared her mother's room. Mrs. Compton was living downstairs in devoted attendance on her

son-in-law. Anthony, a year old, was in Fay's nursery above.

Harry's heavy-lashed eyes looked tragically from a shrunken face greatly refined by suffering. Of the stout, genial Folly chief there was not a trace. The wizard of laughter was a victim of that most deadly, depressing disease, cirrhosis of the liver. He would never smile again. Late one night Fay and I were talking quietly in the room above when our eyes met in apprehension. Something had passed through the room. We went out on to the landing, and there was one of the nurses on the stairs coming to tell Fay that Harry had died suddenly.

Next day I went with Fay to buy mourning. In the streets as we drove along were posters: "Famous Actor Dead," "Death of Pélissier," "Folly Chief Dies."

His widow, aged nineteen, sat beside me in silence, her violet eyes clouded, last night's agonised tangle of red-gold hair smoothed under a small black hat. When the saleswoman asked what depth of mourning the young lady required, I found myself unable to say who she was, but whispered:

"Her husband is dead."

There was an incredulous glance at the girl who stood framed in the mirror, and then a restrained eagerness to find her a garment suitable both to the occasion and her youth. She would wear it at the funeral, but I should not be there to see, for my ticket to Capri was booked and next day I was gone.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SINISTER STREET

MONTY was already at Caterola when I arrived, and so was a large consignment of bulbs. Terraces were prepared and dug, and in the spring Darwin tulips would be seen for the first time in Capri. Along the edge of the cliff a long wide olive-shaded walk was made, flanked by purple irises, with concrete seats here and there where views were best. The work was done by two gnomes, father and son, whose clothes and bodies were so impregnated with the soil that it would not have been surprising to know that when day was done they curled up in holes in the earth, to emerge at the first bird-call with the rest of the animal kingdom. They worked under the guidance of Mimi Ruggiero, who had a small plot of ground on the Via Tragara, the Park Lane of Capri, where he grew flowers to sell in a tiny shop near the Quisisana Hotel. He ran down the steps of his garden as we came along on one of our first walks in Capri, and there was something about him, his wiry movements, the intelligence of his flashing brown eyes, and the rakish angle of his straw hat, worn at the back of his head and yet over one ear, that proclaimed him a personality not to be passed by. He was fair for a Neapolitan and wore a neat little moustache. From that moment of meeting he became part of our life at Capri and Monty's adoring slave. He was an engineer as well as a gardener, and all our road-making at Caterola and Ventrosa was

organised by him. The Krupp road down to the Piccola Marina was his work when he was a very young man, and the great armament king was playing Tiberius on the island. Now Mimi was a family man with several handsome sons and daughters, but the burden of fatherhood lay lightly. *Giocosso* was his fitting adjective.

The garden was the best part of Caterola. The house was originally a peasant's cottage, and had been enlarged with little judgment. The kitchen was only accessible from the outside. The first day I went to interview the cook, who was the wife of the younger gnome, I found a snow-white pigeon strutting about the floor, very much at ease. A pet, no doubt.

"*Molto bello!*" I said pleasantly.

My Italian vocabulary was small, but besides those two words I knew *mangiare* and *pranzo*. So it was conveyed to me that the snow-white pigeon was to be eaten for our dinner.

"*Impossibile!*" was another word I knew, and used emphatically. I could not have a beautiful pigeon so grossly deceived. If birds were to be eaten they must arrive dead. This sort of sloppy sentimentality puzzled the realistic Caprese woman but she accepted it as one of the many unaccountable whims of the *forestieri*.

Before Monty left London for Rapallo that autumn *Sinister Street* had been published and the great Book War set in motion. It began with Hall Caine's *The Woman Thou Gavest Me*, which was banned by the libraries and booksellers. Close upon this followed the "restriction" of two other books, W. B. Maxwell's *The Devil's Garden*, and *Sinister Street*. The authors of these three works were not the kind to tolerate such a policy in silence. The battle roared for over a fort-

night. "The Banned Book Feud" was first-class news in all the London papers and spread to the provinces. Hall Caine was not in need of publicity, and W. B. Maxwell was already an established best-seller, but for a young author with only two books to his credit this publicity was like manna from heaven. The circulation might be restricted, but the ultimate gain was incalculable.

The enthusiastic reviews of *Sinister Street* sent the reading world hot-foot to the libraries and book-shops, only to be met by such obstructive statements as "sold out," or "temporarily out of stock," or "could be obtained if really wanted." Naturally this only made the book more desirable, and the result was that it was much read and widely discussed. Reverberations reached the seats of learning. The book was banned at Eton as a corrupting influence for boys. The Headmaster, Dr. Lyttleton, wrote a letter to *The Times*, complaining of the baneful influence of modern novels upon youth, not mentioning *Sinister Street*, but presumably aware of the noise that had been going on in the press. This letter was the climax, as far as I was concerned, of a series of annoyances which had been hard to endure, and impetuously I wrote an angry protest to Dr. Lyttleton.

He replied suavely that he liked to see a woman defend her husband, but wasn't it as well to make sure first that he had been attacked? He declared that when he wrote the letter to *The Times*, he had not read *Sinister Street*, or only so little of it that *the thought of it never crossed his mind*.

The italics are mine. Three pages of the book were specially in question among the pundits. They would not take long to read. But the Headmaster of Eton,

though he had read "a little" of the book, had not apparently glanced at those three pages. If he had, the thought might have crossed his mind when he wrote his letter to *The Times*.

Because *Sinister Street* was forbidden it was voraciously read at Eton. Ned, having confiscated the book from one of the boys in his house, was faced by the awkward question:

"But, sir, isn't Compton Mackenzie your brother-in-law?"

It was an uncomfortable situation. Edward was apparently sponsoring a book frowned upon by all decent schoolmasters. His name was there in full, with an affectionate dedication from the author. There he was, humming contentedly about the place (living now at Radley with Frank because Ruth had married), quite indifferent to the storm raging round his head. Something must be done about it. The feeling at Eton was very strong that the dedication should be withdrawn, and at last under great pressure the dear old man wrote to Martin Secker and Monty asking that his name should be removed from further editions. "It has got me into trouble." It was obvious that he hated doing it, and when he received my hysterical protests and realised that Monty was deeply hurt, he shut his deaf ears to any more interference.

Dec. 3rd, 1913.

DEAR MR. SECKER,—On second thoughts I withdraw my prohibition. I am sure that I ought to stick to my colours and I am anxious not to cast any possible slur on the book, however I may wish that certain episodes had been less highly coloured.



CASA SOLITARIA, CAPRI







I am anxious it should not on my authority be classed with some other books, whose evil tendency is undoubted.

To Monty:

Faith must not be too hard on the genus schoolmaster or regard him as a humbug. I *may* have been one, but honestly I was never aware of it. I never analysed myself with sufficient care.

To me he wrote of "the cant which you and I abhor" apropos of what is called the religious world, and how far it is from pure enlightenment. He was able to appreciate the sincerity of *Sinister Street* and Monty's conviction that ideals of faith are of greater importance to a growing boy than ideals of conduct.

The amorous school friendship is now a commonplace of fiction and public discussion, but in those days it was hopefully ignored and if faced at all was dealt with behind locked doors only under the strongest compulsion. The moral effect upon an innocent school-boy of those three pages was too horrible for the educational ostriches to contemplate. But the book, Monty declared, was not in any case written for a school library. "If a boy exists who can possibly read it, he will find himself left at the end with a definite prejudice in favour of the Christian religion."

It was soon after he wrote those words that he was received into the Catholic Church at Sorrento when he was in the first chapters of *Sinister Street*, Volume II. He was disappointingly subject to more attacks of the dreaded neuritis. We were in fact both wretchedly ill in that damp little house. Before Monty was up from his neuritis I would be down with a three days' head-

ache of devastating violence. Nothing racks the nerves more cruelly than the contemplation of suffering which one is powerless to relieve. Despair would settle on my spirit. How could this suffering be allowed to go on interminably? There *must* be some remedy. Free from pain he was such a dynamo of tireless energy, so obviously a creature of splendid constitution. Was there no doctor, no treatment that could help him? It seemed that there was none.

Sometimes from the terrace of the little house I would see over the top of the wall an untidy whitish hat sailing swiftly along. I would wait hopefully for its wearer to appear in our gateway, for his alert descent of the steps that led to the terrace. He who never took a *carrozza*, but walked from his far-off tower in Anacapri down the Phoenician steps into Capri would sometimes come still farther, swinging up the paved Tiberio footpath to visit us.

With his grizzled beard, his tall youthful figure and his spectacled eyes which for all their blindness were never deceived, Dr. Axel Munthe was the most interesting and exciting figure on an island that was full of personalities. His apparent remoteness from the preoccupations of common humanity was deceptive, for no one had a livelier finger on the pulse of local gossip than he. There was little that he did not know about all of us. And yet, in his Saracen tower Materita, his seclusion seemed absolute. The world surely could not penetrate those massive walls and that forbidding gateway? The illusion of exclusiveness fascinated the many guests to Materita. A visit to Capri was not really perfect without an invitation to the tower, and to be shown over Villa San Michele by the owner himself was an honour

which sent the visitor driving back to his hotel with a warm sense of superiority. San Michele, with its matchless view and dim green-lit interior, is about a mile and a half away from Materita.

Monty's neuritis was incurable except by complete rest and perpetual freedom from worry, and as neither remedy was desirable or interesting, the pains must go on, but they must not get worse. The future was obscure and to me somewhat frightening. Now we were out there, away from our own people, trying an experiment that seemed to be a failure. It was too early to accept these attacks as part of the rhythm of life, which they eventually became, and the responsibility was heavy upon me. Those pains might be leading up to a climax of chronic invalidism or worse.

Dr. Munthe's friendly visits were consoling. He has a healing presence and his blunt manner conceals what we all know is a very soft heart. He did not attempt to cure Monty but he advised and encouraged me.

"It is nonsense to thank me. I have done nothing," was his attitude, turning an indifferent shoulder and sloping off back to Anacapri, his untidy hat crammed hastily on his head.

His disapproval of Caterola was loudly expressed. As long as Monty was there he would never get better. Why not take San Michele, which was empty? The charm and romance of that now famous villa nearly won us, but its aspect was mostly north, and the rooms, enchanting for exploration, were dim and cold and without heating arrangements. These were defects of the villa's quality and fatal for us. What we wanted was a southern exposure and light, cheerful rooms. And what we wanted was being built by a wise archi-

tect for himself. In the spring of 1913 we had seen its walls going up on a site as fantastic as a dream. We had tiptoed along whitened planks over the foundations and looked up at the limestone cliffs that soared five hundred feet to the Telegrafo summit, and down another three hundred feet to the emerald sea, and out to where the great Faraglioni rocks rose like a cathedral from the water, and beyond was the open Tyrrhenian Sea. No Bay of Naples, but on some days a glimpse of the Salernian coast and always the head of that lizard, the Sorrentine peninsula, Punta Campanella, where the scented wild sweet peas grew.

By the spring of 1914 the house was nearly finished and we met the architect, Edwin Cerio. To our astonishment he was ready to let it. By next autumn it would be habitable. Meanwhile spring was here and he had a pleasant little *casetta* up in Anacapri that we might like to see, an ideal retreat for a writer who wanted peace. Capri was filling up and Caterola only too handy. If *Sinister Street*, Volume II., was ever to be written a refuge from society must be found.

Rosaio seemed remote enough for a hermit and we took it at once. From its rose-tangled garden we could see the grey-green slopes of Monte Solaro and hear the peal of bells from the clock tower of Materita, bells which Dr. Munthe had assembled with such discrimination from odd corners of Europe to make a perfect chime. This was the austere side of the island. Colour was restrained, and there was none of the voluptuous appeal of the rest of Capri. Anacapri was another country, silver and grey, with flat white Moorish houses and small piazzas planted with dwarfish ilex trees.

The silence of moonlit nights was broken by dogs which rushed about the narrow lanes in bands of ten to twenty barking in fearful unison. No one had any influence on these pests, though presumably in their better moments they were employed as sporting dogs. A friend of ours, John Mavrogordato, who was staying with us but slept at the Hôtel Paradiso, engaged a man to escort him home every night. There was no place for a guest at Rosaio, for the ancient little house had only two rooms and a kitchen, all leading into the garden.

Caterola became a guest-house and Capri was full of friends from England; Bernard Walke and his wife, Annie, who one dark night painted "ORA" in front of "PRO CAPRI" on the seats provided by that body for the benefit of visitors; Arthur Eckersley from *Punch*, whose umbrella burst into flames as he sat in the Café Morgano a few minutes after his arrival; Martin Secker, who came across in a full gale and was taken all the way back to Naples because the small boats refused to put out from Capri to take off passengers. When he did arrive at Caterola bringing a full-sized telescope, he had his door blown in and half the roof taken off; Bertram Binyon, the singer, whose mother had been a Capri beauty years ago and had married the artist who admired and painted her. Bertram lived in London and knew every one worth knowing. His singing was delicious and he was excellent company (and still is).

Norman Douglas was there too that spring. He had injured an ankle and rode about like Silenus on his ass, with Rosina the donkey-woman, the prettiest wife on the Piazza, magnificently and it seemed perpetually pregnant, digging lustily at the haunches of

the laggish beast, who wore an expression of sardonic resignation.

Spring, 1914, was a variation on spring, 1913. There were no gay parties at the Villa Torricella, for the old ladies were touring the world with Count Jack. 1914 was rustic and more amusing. Norman Douglas knew all the best places to eat in Capri and Anacapri, and a few bottley lunches and dinners on vine-shaded terraces convinced me that in the right company here was the most enjoyable form of entertainment.

Sometimes an untidy scrawl would be brought to me by Nannina, the daughter of Mary, who waited upon us.

Lunch one sharp if you like. The piano has been tuned.

TIBERIO.

It was a short and lovely walk to Materita through peasant cultivations of green corn and lupin lightly shaded by olive trees. I went swiftly and happily on rope shoes, knowing that this walk was a prelude to a delightful afternoon. At the great iron gate I broke the silence with a peal on the bell which rang over my head. Nothing happened. At the second peal the tiny figure of a woman appeared in the far distance at the end of the long pergola and began climbing the steps. But before she was a quarter of the way up the emergence of dogs from a path close by heralded the approach of Dr. Munthe himself with a bunch of keys.

"Come in. Welcome. You are five minutes late. Do not touch that dog. He is very fierce."

A Ma'emma sheepdog puppy with deceptively pleasant manners.

In the square tower room was the grand piano. There were also about twenty clocks, some days ticking

with all their might and striking with great independence, and some days all silent.

"You must look at *her* before you have lunch."

He lifted a piece of purple velvet to reveal the exquisite Sibylline mask that was his latest acquisition. Where it came from he refused to tell.

Lunch was eaten in a small white room whose Gothic windows were entirely shrouded in greenery made translucent by the brilliant sun outside. The food was simple and we drank his own good wine. After which I opened the piano in the square room and found the Brahms, Schumann and Schubert songs.

Wandering about the room, Dr. Munthe sang in a pleasant musical voice, his thumbs stuck into the sleeves of a red waistcoat, sometimes with his back to me, sometimes turning over the leaves impatiently, which embarrassed me more than doing it myself. Accompanying was my favourite musical occupation, and singing was, I think, his, which was why I spent so much time at Materita that spring.

Monty signed a contract with Edwin Cerio for the house at the Faraglioni. It was called Casa Solitaria, and its only approach was the narrow cliff path which led from the Tragara to the Arco Naturale and the grotto of Mithras. "BEATA SOLITUDINE" was blazoned on the façade of the house, and a more significant pronouncement was already set over the fireplace in the salone. It was:

NEC TECUM NEC SINE TE VIVERE POSSUM.

"Neither with thee nor without thee can I live!" Nothing could obliterate these words, for they were an integral part of the house, a whim of the architect's



carried out in majolica tiles with decorations of the thistle which he had made the symbol of the villa. "Neither with thee nor without thee" . . .

We left Edwin Cerio having special dinner services made for Solitaria, one with the thistle and the other with the Mackenzie motto, LUCEO NON URO, and the sun in splendour. He was as excited about the house as we were, and would have it all furnished and ready with linen when we returned from England in the autumn. Caterola was evacuated without regret, Nannina, the Daughter of Mary, was left in charge of Rosaio, and we went back to stay in Martin Secker's home at Iver, a perfect Queen Anne house called Bridgefoot. *Sinister Street*, Volume II., was to be finished for autumn publication. As I typed what Monty wrote the sheets were snatched from the machine and rushed to the printer.

At Bridgefoot the sheepdog Bob was now happily established. It had been bitter to leave him when I joined Monty in America, but it was worse for me than for him. Mrs. Lamont, who shared Bridgefoot with Martin, spoilt animals shamelessly, and he was absolutely happy, but his heart was faithful, for however many months I was away, he always greeted me as though I had just been to London for the day, and followed me up to bed as a matter of course, with a polite gesture of good-night to the rest of the company.

"You are the one," his eyes said as he settled down in his corner. But he said the same thing, I believe and hope, to Mrs. Lamont when I was away, for a more devoted friend no dog ever had.

July, 1914. The garden at Bridgefoot was a sweet refuge from the heatwave, and in the paddock across the stream there was a croquet lawn for Monty's

leisure. But he never went to bed till daylight and slept through the morning. The strain of finishing the book in time for September brought several bad attacks of neuritis, but by the end of July it was nearly done, and half of it was already set up in print when the 4th of August dawned. And that night we lay awake listening to the almost incessant sound of trains rattling through the darkness, train after train.

Monty would finish *Sinister Street* and would try for a commission in Egypt. He must be in it, but it was obviously no use trying to get out to France to be invalided home again at once. Christopher enlisted and went off to train somewhere near Horsham with a Public Schools' battalion. *Sinister Street* was published while we were still at Bridgefoot, and Monty had no luck with his Egyptian commission.

"No one wants a subaltern of thirty-one," he said bitterly.

Then Edwin Cerio wrote, "Solitaria is waiting for you." He was no doubt afraid we should break our contract with him, and described the charms of the house and the peace of the island in alluring terms. Why stay in England when that house was ready for us and there was another book to be written? Better to be away from it all than not in it, was Monty's view, and mine was frankly to be away from it as much as possible. So we crossed the Channel in a boat full of officers going back from leave to Boulogne. Nelly was with us again after a series of adventures culminating in a visit to Germany which ended abruptly with a walk across the frontier at the beginning of August.

We found Solitaria quaintly furnished by Edwin Cerio with a set of ceremonial Venetian arm-chairs of surprising discomfort, Maxim Gorky's writing-table,

which was about seven feet long and covered with green baize, a divan the size of a small room, also from Gorky's Capri house; dozens of plates and dishes, plenty of linen, and a snuffer for destroying flies, the purpose of which puzzled us for a long time. And there was an enormous baroque mirror in the salone which must have come from some Roman palace, and though it was oblong in shape it covered nearly the whole of one wall.

Such necessities as beds and chests of drawers had been supplied with an obvious lack of enthusiasm. Our own furniture and curtains were already on their way out so what did it matter? The shape of the dining-room had been an inspiration to Cerio. It opened straight out of the hall, and he had built it with a rounded end and two portholes looking out to sea. This rounded end was fitted with seats before which a semi-circular table was spread, and here we were to sit and eat our meals from the beautiful dinner service that he had made for us. But we never did. The table was only used for dinner parties, and then in the middle of the room. The semi-circular arrangement of guests was amusing and sometimes perplexing. Who should go on the two outsides? But with soft lamplight, plenty of room on the table for flat "floral decorations," a tablecloth beautifully embroidered by local girls and the genial atmosphere that pervaded most Capri parties, the half-moon table had a style all its own.

The dining-room floor was paved with tiles of a charming yellow lily design, and the salone next door had thistle tiles which matched that mantelpiece with its motto, *NEC TECUM*, etc. Two bedrooms and a bathroom completed the ground floor. The bathroom was

a novelty then, and was fed by a cistern from across the path (there was no road), where later Edwin Cerio built a foresteria and used all the bath water for building it. But we all forgave each other almost everything, after we had said all there was to say about it. Edwin was an artist in all he did, and since those days he has written a book called *Aria di Capri* to prove that he has the gift of words as well as of houses.

To reach the studio it was necessary to go out of doors, up the front steps and round to the great room that held so much of our story. A huge window looked out to sea and the Faraglioni rocks. A smaller one, with a window-seat, framed a matchless view which included Monte Solaro, Ventrosa and every sunset. East was the french window that led to the terrace which was the roof of the rest of the house and intended for another storey eventually. From this terrace we could see the moon rise over the Sorrentine peninsula and watch the dolphins playing round the Monocone rock below us, and at night the fishermen with their torches casting giant shadows against the Faraglioni. On calm nights the whole sea was starred with fishing lights. There was a half-moon terrace below the house which drew us at all hours of the day and night. A sheer drop of three hundred feet to the emerald water below, lit in its depths by the sun at midday, clear as a precious stone.

But we must pull ourselves together and not be hanging over terraces wasting the hours with sights and sounds that enchanted us. There was not time now to spend on dreams.

We had perfect servants at last. Carolina and her nephew Antonio, aged fifteen, already an admirable chef; Carolina, a tiny wisp of a woman, neat, reliable

and devoted. Antonio would be seen every morning strolling along the path from the Tragara smoking a cigarette, followed by a humble old woman heavily laden, with a full basket on her head. All the chefs did their own shopping, but they must never be seen carrying the smallest parcel. When the *facchina* had retired with her empty basket, Antonio, in his white cap and coat, would receive me in the kitchen and show me his *spese* book and the purchases he had made. He would also tell me what we were going to have for lunch and dinner. That was the charm of house-keeping in Capri. Unless one was having a party and sent to Naples for special luxuries, it was no use ordering meals because there was no knowing what was to be found on the Piazza. No one could guess what the boat would bring. So all responsibility rested on the chef, and it was his job to get to the Piazza early and pick the best. Antonio was proud of his shopping and enjoyed his work. He sang as he cooked and he sang nearly as well as he cooked.

The Wolcott-Perrys and Count Jack returned from their world tour with their trunkloads of treasures. There were presents for every one, and parties to view the astonishing collection. Who would have dreamt that a year later all those treasures would mysteriously disappear from sealed cupboards when the villa was empty again? There were the seals apparently intact when the old ladies came back from an American visit, but the cupboards were bare. A young servant who had been with them since a boy was led away in chains, but there was more in it than that, much more that was never known, or at least never revealed.

Count Jack brought a young Siamese cat from the royal palace of Siam. The little princess consoled her-

self with a handsome ginger cat of the people up at Tiberio, and two tortoiseshell kittens were born and given to us almost before they could walk, for the sake of Count Jack's valuable carpets.

They were called Guy and Pauline, and slept in a basket house labelled Plasher's Mead, which J. E. Brooks gave them. Guy, whom we did not then realise must be a female, being tortoiseshell, died a year later in childbirth; Pauline became the loveliest little cat imaginable, brilliantly coloured, exquisitely made, with a coat of velvet, a deep Siamese voice and the pride of Lucifer.

Like her parent she married beneath her, a pale ginger love-child whom I found one morning outside the front door of Solitaria. His mother was a miserable creature streaked like a dirty palette, who haunted the house of a neighbouring *contadino*, and generally produced deplorable litters doomed to destruction. To save her darling from this fate she carried him down to us, to be brought up as a gentleman. Poor ambitious scarecrow, she would slink down to visit him, lap up the milk we put out for her, and after giving him a good wash-down and a kiss, would silently disappear. This was no place for her, she knew; she never obtruded herself, and when he was big enough she ceased her visits. A rare tale of selfless love.

He grew up into a likeable stolid creature with a high voice. His pads and nose were unusually pink, so he was called Pinkie, which was all right when he was a kitten, but was hardly dignified enough for Pauline's husband. This he had to be, because we were so remote that even her charms could not entice the Capri gallants as far as Solitaria. His mother's ambition was satisfied. He married a princess.

She treated him with good-natured contempt.

"Poor sap!" she murmured as she sniffed with fastidious concentration at his behind, turning away, her mouth half-open in a tigerish ecstasy. "My God!"

"Oh, oh," he whimpered. "It might be worse. Anyway—what about it? You don't seem to——"

Her reply was a smart cuff on the jaw.

"Don't you flatter yourself. You're nothing, my good creature. Simply a *pis aller*, that's what you are. A *pis aller*."

"A what? Oh, oh, how rude. I don't know what it means, but I won't stand it. I shall go out to-night. I shall! I shall! I won't be called that. I shall go out and I shan't come back. I shan't, so now!"

"Rats!" She gave him a swift upper-cut with her left and walked away with her tail in the air.

Half an hour later they were lying together in front of the salone fire, her slim white paws firmly encircling his neck. That was their domestic life, and they had large families, but never a kitten to compare with Pauline.

While a full gale tore at the great studio window *Guy and Pauline* was begun on New Year's Eve, 1914. The wind blew ferociously for three days, and then again on the 12th of January, by which time Monty was in bed, racked by sciatica. Carolina was nearly blown away as she rounded the corner before Pizzo Lungo; the noise in our room was so terrific that we moved Monty into the salone, where he lay in comparative tranquillity, heavily drugged by the doctor, and composing limericks with a look of angelic concentration.

"Here's a good one. Take this down. 'There was a——'"

"Pretty good. But it's scorched the paper."

Nearly as good in its simple way was a verse I cut out of a Christmas Number:

Out from island, cape and isthmus  
Rings our British Three Times Three  
As we wish a happy Christmas  
To our lads on land and sea.

It was a fine example of detachment and concentration that held Monty to *Guy and Pauline*. With the war twitching at his sleeve perpetually, he gave himself to the book. Inspiration never wavered, and only pains interrupted the work in hand. J. E. Brooks sometimes dined with us, sitting with a book in the studio and taking a turn at the piano which he played with fidgety excitement. He had lately discovered Debussy, and a piano arrangement of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* sent his fingers dancing insecurely among the keys. Then he would take his lantern and trip out into the night, back to the Villa Cercola which he shared with E. F. Benson and Somerset Maugham, who were seldom there together and not often there at all.

From the half-moon terrace below Solitaria, steps led down to the garden which had been scooped out of the wild cliffside and planted with cypresses by Edwin Cerio before he built the house. Over a pinkish yellow grotto in this garden towered Pizzo Lungo, the huge pointed rock that was a landmark from the sea. (Later I was honoured by the Piazza with the title of Signora *Pizzo Lungo* in addition to *La Maghenz*.)

In this garden Mimi had re-planted the Darwin tulips from Caterola, and Monty stood about directing



operations, chiefly for the sake of Mimi's company. He had fluent Italian now; at Caterola he had mastered the principal verbs, the pronouns and prepositions; nouns and adjectives followed in due course. Looking down from my favourite window-seat whence I could enjoy sunsets and storms, I would watch them talking, the conversation flowing from their finger-tips as well as their mouths. Even Mimi's Neapolitan gesticulations were no more expressive than those of Monty, to whom gesture comes as naturally as breathing.

Then I would realise that Monty was wearing thin shoes, having perhaps just gone out for a moment or two to speak to Mimi about something, and lost count of time. I would jump from the window-seat, run downstairs and hurry to the garden with something thicker.

"Thanks. All right. I'm just coming in."

Too late. Next day he would be down with pains.

In Christmas week there was a dinner for thirty fishermen and cab-drivers at the Piccola Marina, and another event was Mass celebrated by the Parroco in the dining-room at Solitaria. Mimi erected an altar with an eight-foot cross of irises in the place of the semi-circular dining-table. He was busy, too, engineering the paths at Ventrosa, where the two gnomes were now encamped in a grotto whose only sign of occupation was a black pot on a tripod.

From tempestuous January into a freakish February with brilliant warm days, wild grey scirocco days, anemones and cyclamen along the cliffs, letters from England arriving heavily censored, one from Edmund Gosse to Monty, not only censored, but the writing criticised as being illegible. Mr. Gosse wrote an in-



FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE AND NORMAN DOUGLAS  
(CAPRI)



dignant letter to *The Times* about this. Edward's long weekly letters to me were hideously ill-treated, whole tracts of his lovely writing obliterated with a filthy black mess. He also was indignant.

What on earth does it mean? In future, darling daughter, I suppose I must write nothing but balderdash.

But he managed to get this through:

I wrote a letter to the *Spectator* last week in which I call upon the Government to confess their folly and wickedness. Here is a confessional worth something; as a rule it is an empty form. . . . As it is they are only plunging deeper in the mire. They wallow in trickery and dishonour. . . . It is pettiness which destroys domestic peace. The official is Prussian, his petty rules over-ride all humanity, but his power, I hope, is waning, in spite of Lloyd George. What an orator the man is!

7 a.m. My tea is due. Here it comes.

Work and play all through February and March. Lunch parties and teas, but always home for dinner and *Guy and Pauline*. Once there was quite an amusing tea at Count Jack's and a good look at his treasures. The pictures on his walls were almost exclusively modern young men of pleasant aspect in classic attitudes, but there was one portrait of a young woman in black knee-breeches, seated on a chair, her elegant legs crossed and one white-cuffed hand dangling.

A dark head and full challenging eyes. Who was this?

"My wife," J. E. Brooks joined me as I stood in front of it. Of course! He had a wife. Long ago he had married her when she came to Capri, a young art student, and then she had inherited a fortune and gone away, but had not forgotten him. Now she is a famous painter. "Romaine—h'm—h'm—yes, that's Romaine. A good portrait. I wish it were mine. But Count Jack bought it, and there it is. You like it?"

Yes, indeed I liked it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CAPRI

ON the 19th of February the Dardanelles were attacked by a British Fleet, and it was not long before the rumours of an expeditionary force to that part of the world reached Capri. Winston Churchill's inspired conception! Here was an engrossing preoccupation for Monty. The possibilities of that campaign! Properly handled, it could end the war. He preached this to sceptical lunch parties and to any one who would listen. I knew he was longing to be in it, more than ever now. But it seemed to be an established fact that he was unfit for service, and he did not mention even to me how much he wanted to go.

Nelly was typing *Guy and Pauline* on an L. C. Smith machine like a Dreadnought that he had brought from America, and upstairs he sat in his invalid chair pulled up to the Gorky table, had his meals on trays, and spent his leisure playing with the kittens, who lived entirely in the studio. There was only one possible use for the long sausage cushions with which the huge Gorky divan was provided. They were laid side by side on the floor and covered with paper to make tunnels for the kittens to rush through in a state of delicious panic, their tails like bottle brushes. He would make a parcel of one kitten, wrapping it up in sheets of newspaper; the other would leap upon it and the fun would begin. Nothing excites a kitten more than *The Times*. These games were better than a ballet.

Comedy and grace combined to give exquisite entertainment.

On the 10th of April a letter came to Monty from his friend, Orlo Williams, written from R.M.S. *Francia*, bound for the Dardanelles, with Sir Ian Hamilton and his staff on board. He said that he wrote by order of Sir Ian, who was reading *Sinister Street*, Vol. II., and would like to get him on his staff in some capacity. If Monty felt up to it he should get into communication with Eddie Marsh and get sent out as a Marine "or anything."

Did Monty feel up to it? Nelly and I went into Capri at once and sent off a wire to Eddie Marsh,<sup>1</sup> who was then Winston Churchill's private secretary. Brooks came down that night to dine and spluttered with indignation.

"But, my dear Monty, this is outrageous! H'm, h'm, you are not fit. You mustn't dream of it. It's—it's preposterous! It's monstrous! Faith, you can't allow it."

Monty's expression silenced argument. He was transformed. What he wanted had come, and he had known it would come, whence or how he had not guessed. I could only say:

"But dear Brooks, it's what he wants!"

I had known it always, had hoped for it for him, dreading it for myself. Brooks the scholar was genuinely dismayed. What, he exclaimed, was going to happen to art and letters?

Next day the telegram was returned, stopped at the frontier. Our Consul-General was Sidney Churchill, Oriental scholar, unpopular among the old maids of both sexes in the British colony, but a man of great

<sup>1</sup>Sir Edward Marsh, etc.

originality and charm, who was our good friend. To him Monty wrote for advice and he replied with a wire that a messenger was going to England tomorrow, the 13th, who could take a letter. Mimi, who had broken down and wept when he heard the news, was charged with the sad mission of carrying the letter across to Naples. That night Brooks dined and Monty read *Another March* and *Another April*. There was only *Another Summer* to do, and how much time would there be for that?

Now the house was full of Darwin tulips and people were coming and going, anxious for news, incredulous. Surely Monty of all people was the least fit for active service? There he was, in bed again with the usual pains, his nerves on edge while London dallied with his future. On the 15th came a telegram:

LIEUTENANT MARINES AWAIT ORDERS FROM  
HAMILTON

For the next hour his pains were forgotten, but I had a sharp attack of colic. When Mimi came and sat with him, I walked with Nelly along the cliffs; white cistus everywhere, grape hyacinths and deep-blue lithospermum trailing over the limestone rocks.

What on earth was going to happen to him out there? Who would mix his Sanatogen and see that he didn't sit about in the damp? I took the flannel sheets he slept in and joined them up to make sacks, but how could I be sure that he would use them? The idea of his sleeping in a tent was monstrous, but that was apparently what he expected to do.

A heavy scirocco like the breath from a furnace



blew for three days. Pains were so bad that we injected a shot of morphia that the doctor had left. It must have been a double dose, for he turned green and lay speechless all the afternoon, being violently sick at intervals and then going into a deathly sleep from which he awoke in the middle of the night and ate fried eggs and cold asparagus.

Whatever any one else thought about Monty's going to Gallipoli, the Perrys thought it was grand. They gave a splendid lunch party in his honour which went on all the afternoon. Among the guests was Count Jack, who was already uncomfortably aware that the dogs of war were at his heels, conscious also of the tightening of Kate's mouth when he held forth on the ethics of killing, of Saidee's sombre eyes fixed on the glass he held up to toast his gallant friend Mackenzie. They were rather hard on Count Jack, those hot-headed old ladies, for he had a natural disinclination to fight and was probably aware that he would be of no use whatever in the field. He spent the greater part of the war in and out of a nursing home, which was not at all amusing for him, but less tedious than the Western Front might have been.

Eddie Marsh wrote that he had made Monty a Lieutenant in record time, and God knew where he would get his uniform. It was almost too extraordinary a coincidence that an English officer invalided out of the army should have come to Capri with most of his kit, but that is what did happen.

More farewell lunch parties, but no more news from England. Then the Italian papers were full of our troops leaving Cairo with bands and cheers for the Dardanelles. This was too much for Monty.

"My God, I shall be too late! They'll be in Con-

stantinople before I have a chance to get out there. Oh, why don't my orders come!"

He worked till two the night after he heard this news, and then violent pains came on. We gave him two injections of morphia which had no effect. In the morning the doctor gave him a new drug. No good. I wrote to Mrs. Compton that day:

I've never spent such a heart-rending day. I was dreading all the time that a wire would come calling him up. He couldn't possibly have gone. He was half-delirious all day, talking of regiments and Turks. I suppose I oughtn't to harrow you with all this but I want you to know how hard it is being for him. The commission came so easily, it seemed as though everything falls into his lap—but how all this luck is counter-balanced by his tragic suffering. He *must go*. I think he will die if he doesn't, and I am dreading losing him. In his worst agony this morning his heavy boots arrived from the shoemaker studded with nails for active service!

Two days after this fearful attack he finished *Guy and Pauline* to the strains of Schumann's *Romanzes*. Next day he was gazetted to the phantom ship *Victory*. But still there were no orders, and now that the book was finished there was nothing to keep him in Capri, and who could tell what he was missing in the Dardanelles? Another wire to London. There was a boat going to Alexandria on the 30th. Should he take that? Official from the Admiralty: "Advise waiting."

This was fairly definite; at any rate he was not

forgotten. The uncertainty was simply when, not whether, he would be called up. There was a yacht at Sorrento for sale. It had belonged to a German and was going cheap. Most of the Germans and Austrians had left by now, though Italy was neutral for another month. Monty went off to Sorrento to look at the yacht. While he was away the weather changed. It rained and blew. He was wearing rope shoes and had no wraps of any kind. I occupied myself with binding up the two manuscripts of *Guy and Pauline*, but nervously dreaded his return, soaked to the skin and probably already in pain.

Brooks and Somerset Maugham were dining with us, and I was going to wear my favourite orange and gold dress in honour of Somerset Maugham, but was so apprehensive when seven o'clock came with no sign of Monty, that I put on a black frock and waited despondently in the salone. Then he arrived in great spirits, perfectly well. He had bought the yacht and re-christened it *Fede*. By the time our guests arrived I was in my orange and gold dress, the half-moon table was gay with flowers hastily added in the Caprese fashion by Carolina, and the evening ended round a blazing fire in the salone.

Between that dinner and the final farewell party there was a glorious day at Ventrosa, inspection of paths and exploration of remote uncharted points in this vast Caucasian property of ours. It is the wildest part of Capri, still unexploited, a natural sanctuary for birds.

At dusk we turned back to Solitaria, where still no telegram was waiting in the hall. But our farewell dinner party should not be postponed, and it took place next day. Mimi decorated the half-moon table

*con amore*, Monty was all in white, I wore my orange dress, his health was drunk and drunk again. He writes of this party in *Gallipoli Memories*:

I could not honestly claim that when the guests bade me good-bye that night, I had the least premonition that they were saying good-bye to somebody whom they would never see again. Looking back at that party from the present, I can recognise that it marked the end of a period in my life.

That was true enough. In my locked diary I wrote when he left that I feared I should never see him again. I never did see exactly that person who had completely filled my life for nearly ten years. The war, for better or worse, changed us all, and I changed no less than he.

Next day his orders came, to report at Alexandria. We went up to Anacapri, he said good-bye to Dr. Munthe, and in the Café Morgano a stream of people came for a last salute. An Italian *avvocato* kissed him on both cheeks and burst into tears. Brooks came home and dined with us in a state of nervous apprehension. He left early and we finished packing. In the dawn Carolina brought our breakfast, and at sunrise Monty left the house. I waved from the studio window but would not go to the Piazza. I knew there would be plenty of friends there even at that early hour of the morning, and walking home again alone or accompanied would be an anti-climax beyond my strength.

Next day came a wire from Monty that his boat, the *Roma*, would pass between Capri and Punta Campanella, through the Bocca, at five o'clock in the

afternoon. Mimi was coming back from Naples by the Capri boat and hoped to be in time to dip the Scottish flag as he passed. A few friends came down and we waited on the terrace that was the roof of the house. The telescope was put out, the flag was flying, tea was finished, the sun was sinking and still there was no sign either of Mimi or the *Roma*.

At seven o'clock there was a commotion up on the Telegrafo Hill above us. Mimi came plunging down it, and dashed on to the terrace. He had been watching from the wireless station, and sighted the *Roma* steaming towards the Bocca. Very small she looked with her black and white funnel, but through the telescope we could see Monty waving a white handkerchief. Mimi dipped the flag three times, and into the gloaming she passed, over the Tyrrhenian Sea towards Sicily. I went down to the half-moon terrace, and as I watched, her lights went on; soon she was a glow-worm in the purple distance.

In the salone Mimi was waiting for me. He carried a letter from Monty and his passport photograph, which brought to my eyes the tears that so far had been kept back. The moustache he had grown hopefully when war broke out, and shaved in despair in February, had appeared again in the last few weeks, his hair had been stripped by a local barber, and the tired, strained look in his eyes, the haggard cheeks seemed to portend death. It was an abominable photograph, but that did not occur to me. I simply saw a tragic face which faintly suggested (and that made it worse) the vivid countenance I knew so well.

And then Mimi, with tears in *his* eyes, pressed into my hand the duplicate of a medal of Our Lady of Pompeii, whose day was yesterday, the 13th of May,

which he had given Monty, and half a bunch of red carnations which he had divided between us. He dropped a tear on my hand as he kissed it, and then Carolina brought in the lamp with her usual:

*"Buona sera, Signora!"*

She drew the apricot curtains that had come from North Street, shut out that purple darkness, and I went to bed and slept the sleep that sometimes the gods send to mortals in distress.

"I've never enjoyed myself so much in my life."

"Life gets more fantastically improbable every day."

Thus Monty from Headquarters at Imbros, and later from Athens and Syra, when he was head of the Ægean Intelligence. After two years of all that it was:

"I'm sick of this bloody war."

I was sick of it long before that. When he was gone, and my occupation with him, there seemed nothing else to do but throw myself with enthusiasm into war work. The Red Cross Sewing Bee, organised by the British ladies in Capri, proved to be a hornet. It was simply, it turned out, a question of who was going to boss the show. Mrs. A. had only one explanation for the behaviour of Mrs. Z. at their stormiest committee meeting.

"Drunk, drunk, drunk! Drunk as a lord! Must have been. And all our dear Tommies dying like flies. Always knew she drank. Drinks like a fish. Drunk as a lord. Ought to resign. *Will* resign, if I have any-

thing to do with it. Why don't you come on the committee? Do your bit, old girl."

"Not likely. I've never been on a committee in my life."

"Now's the time. Come on. Get that old devil Z. out between us. Dir-ty old swine!"

Something was lacking in the spirit of those Red Cross meetings, and after one visit, during which I struggled with an extremely elaborate shirt which Mrs. Z. handed me with a look of hatred and not a word of explanation, I retired with a clear conscience, leaving a subscription that I knew would be more useful than my needlework.

Throughout my life at Capri, my relations with Mrs. A. swung jerkily from rapturous friendship to bitter enmity without disturbing the delight I had in her glorious inconsequence. One day we would be walking closely linked, with her fox fur round both our shoulders, her handsome face, more Roman than Greek but unquestionably classic of a sort, wreathed with benevolence, as she cast greetings like confetti to the passers-by.

"Bun dgor!<sup>1</sup> Bun dgor! Dear things! They all love me. Bun dgor! Bun dgor!"

A week later I might receive such a note as this:

Mrs. A. would be obliged if Mrs. Mackenzie would return the music Mrs. A. lent Mrs. Mackenzie. Messenger waits.

It is true that there was a long period during the war when relations were more than strained. I soon became so exasperated by the futility of the struggle

<sup>1</sup>*Buon giorno.*

imposed on brave men and the hysterical nonsense doled out by newspapers and war-mongers to credulous publics, that I was suspected of being a pro-German. I saw no reason, either, why I should cease to salute a Prussian lady married to an Italian whom I frequently met on her solitary walks. At our first meeting after our countries were at war, there had been a faint hesitation on both sides for fear of what the other might wish to do. Her situation was especially unhappy, for she was loyal to the country of her birth, though she was an Italian subject with two sons fighting in the Italian Army. She spent much of her time sitting on a seat outside Solitaria, where she was away from the crowd and its cold or cruel looks. An Englishwoman boasted that she had put out her tongue at the Prussian woman. That was the sort of thing that drove me to injudicious extremes.

The tantalising uncertainty of communication between G.H.Q. Imbros and Capri, and the urge that was still on me to do something useful, decided me to go to England six weeks after Monty had left. Tessie Brennan had come out to stay with me, diverting me from melancholy thoughts. Brooks was fussily devoted, and Somerset Maugham often came to dine. The bundle of papers that arrived by every post from England attracted him, and he did not pretend otherwise. I did a drawing of him, showing nothing but a chair, an open newspaper and a pair of crossed legs, and called it "Somerset Maugham dines with friends." He had the manuscript of a play with him, and Nelly typed it for him on the L. G. Smith, No. 2. It was *Our Betters* under another name. Soon he went back to the war, but he did not forget to recommend Nelly's typing when he got to London.



That L. G. Smith, No. 2, had an interesting career. I typed the beginning of Norman Douglas's *South Wind* on it, later *Sylvia Scarlett*, Nelly followed with *Sylvia and Michael*, and some years later D. H. Lawrence borrowed it for *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. When he had finished with it he carried it back to Solitaria on his head. Finally it crashed on a journey to the Channel Islands. A noble instrument which served us faithfully for ten years.

By the middle of July I was in London. Nelly found absorbing work at the War Office, which kept her for two years till she rejoined us at Capri. I was told the best thing to do was munitions. .

"Motor down to Erith, stand for eight hours, but you don't notice it. It's tremendously exciting. Come on!"

No, I wouldn't make shells. Too exciting.

What about working for the Soldiers' and Sailors' families? All I had to do was to go round to the wives and find out how they were spending their money and how much they were in need of help, and give them advice if necessary. Nose around. No. Who was I to advise anybody?

The friend who suggested this tried to lure me into it with amusing incidents of her own experience, as a guarantee that it was worth doing. One of these true tales was of a soldier who had been urged to write to the Registrar himself to make arrangements for his too long postponed marriage. He wrote:

DEAR SIR,—If convenient to you, I wish to consummate my marriage in your office at 11.30 a.m. next Thursday.

If any one could have driven me into good works it would have been that delightful friend of mine, but she, who was the perfect example of a useful woman, on the principle that a dress or hat can only be useful if it is becoming, accepted my futility with an affectionate twinkle in her clear blue eyes. I had known her as a girl, a rebellious figure against a sober background, dashing off to Germany for a good time, impatient of social London and dull convention. Now her inheritance, the mantle of philanthropy, had fallen on her pretty shoulders, and she wore it with authority and grace.

Tea at Rumpelmayer's with Ford Madox Hueffer<sup>1</sup> led me to work in a canteen near Victoria Station. He knew some one on the committee. He was now holding a commission in a Welch regiment, much against the wishes of Violet Hunt, who resented the possible sacrifice of his gifts.

I once spent Christmas with the Hueffers at a cottage near Burnham Beeches. My contribution to the household was a Sudbury ham, which was fallen upon with greedy enthusiasm by the other guest, Ezra Pound, who talked without ceasing throughout the festival. On Christmas Day Ford could only be approached through the keyhole of his bedroom, in which he was firmly locked against all comers. The cause of this retirement was not made known, but it gave a spice to the party, since Violet was continually running upstairs to entreat him, speculating loudly as to why he was up there at all, and giving a touch of drama to the whole affair, so that the trumpery little cottage (which was only lent) achieved a sort of sublimity as the setting of a scene in history. Mean-

<sup>1</sup>Now Ford Madox Ford.

while Ezra's monologue went on without serious interruption.

Ford, releasing himself from bondage on St. Stephen's Day, descended upon us with his store of intellectual energy unimpaired by festive excesses, full of benevolence, good cheer and lively conversation; in short, he was himself again. And Violet, her great eyes blazing, carved the turkey and what remained of the ham with more than her usual dexterity, her cheeks flushed at the excitement of his restoration. It was a really notable Christmas, for I was, and have always been, devoted to Ford and Violet.

The canteen was hard work. The men had good food and paid for it. There were so many halfpennies involved that I encouraged them to add up their bills themselves with excellent results. I was pacifist throughout the war, so that I only sought peaceful occupation, which I found at Horseferry Road, where books were packed for the troops. Choosing books from piles and shelves (what rubbish people had got rid of!), wrapping them in brown-paper, sewing them in sacks and enveloping them in waterproof covering was a satisfying task.

And there were bandages. Cavendish Square. I used to walk round the square before I could make up my mind to enter this alarming beehive. On my first day, after a long walk between crowded tables, I was put down to a "stump" bandage which seemed unnecessarily complicated. I made several visits to this efficiently run establishment, and each time it was almost impossible to find a seat.

"Let me see, Mrs. Mackenzie. I think there *may* be a place over there. Oh, no, some one has just sat down.



EDWARD



If you'll wait a little while, I'm sure there'll be a vacant place. We're rather full to-day."

This happened every time I went. There were more than enough women. They swarmed, and seemed to swarm round me when I sat down, waiting to glide into my seat, which I was only too ready to give up. I decided to abandon Cavendish Square for ever when I met my old friend of Burford days, Kate Whitworth-Jones, now Mrs. Cecil Rowntree.

"What are you doing here?"

"Trying to make myself useful. There's such an infernal crowd. . . ."

"Come upstairs with me. I'm right at the top of the house making slippers. It's much quieter up there."

I went up with her. There was only one other woman in the room, the mother of Ralph Straus, the critic. Peace reigned. I determined to spend the rest of my time in London making slippers for wounded men with two agreeable women. Too good, much too good to be true.

No sooner had the prospect of daily war work become tolerable than I was faced with a problem which it did not take long to solve. Seeing in the paper that a friend whom I respected and admired had been arrested on a peculiar charge, I wrote to him in prison assuring him of my belief in his innocence. A week later he turned up at my flat on bail, and asked me to help him with an important work he had to finish. I was the only person available at the time, as every one else was rightly absorbed in war work, so I abandoned Cavendish Square and the rest, devoting all my time to him and his work. The case was continually being remanded, and as I was to give evidence, this

involved my attending the police court each time. There was a monotonous lack of variety in the cases brought before the magistrate. The majority were deserters with despair in their wretched countenances, and young girls of fourteen and fifteen hauled up for soliciting.

One pretty child with a pigtail was defiant in the dock, until the magistrate called to her mother, who was in court.

"I order that this girl shall be bound over and that her mother shall be responsible for her. She must go home to her mother."

At this the girl burst into loud crying, and was led out in hysterics. The verdict was evidently, to her, the last straw. These neglected children were victims of the war as surely as the soldier dying or mutilated on the battlefield.

Sometimes I sat with my friend and his solicitor near the magistrate in the seats reserved for distinguished strangers. When his name was called he would leave me and go into the dock, and when he had finished we would go out and have lunch. The day I gave my evidence I was sitting in the well of the court with the rest of the public. When the case was called, an usher came up to me and whispered that he advised me to leave the court.

"I'm a witness in this case."

"Oh!" He passed on, and soon I was called.

My evidence was simple. It was that he had lunched with me abroad when the police supposed he was in London. Mistaken identity. That was the end of the case, and that was my "war work." I thought it was worth doing, because I happened to be the only person who could do it, and it would be absurd

to pretend that it was anything but interesting and exciting.

In the middle of August, 1915, I had a long diary letter from Monty, written while the Suvla Bay tragedy was going on. He quotes it in *Gallipoli Memories*. At the end, on August 12, he tells that he has just met Sir Ian Hamilton outside his tent. He had said:

"You're not looking well. You'd better go to Athens for the week-end."

That visit to Athens led to his astonishing Secret Service career.

I took his letter down to Radley for Edward to read. He was in grand form, and spent a good deal of time watching the Inns of Court O.T.C. drilling. They included such veterans as Owen Seaman and F. H. Anstey. Eighty-two-year-old Edward would stand pensively at the drawing-room window leaning on his stick.

"Aha! The old chaps are at it again. They're smartening up, I do declare."

All that autumn I was haunted by a white house set among limestone cliffs, a half-moon terrace, a garden full of cypresses and olive trees, and a great rock pointing to the skies. Wherever I went, whatever I did, the mirage hung there. Was I bewitched?

Monty was safer now, in Athens. His letters came through steadily to London, always by bag, which brought him nearer; I did not worry about him, except when I heard that he was ill, and even then I realised that there would always be plenty of people to take care of him wherever he was.

"Another letter from Monty! How often does he write?"



"Whenever there's a bag, I think."

"Well, my dear. I'm surprised. I should never have thought he would be a good correspondent."

It was Norman Douglas speaking, and we were dining at Gennaro's in Old Compton Street, which was then a small restaurant dependent upon a coterie of English artists and a few Italians. The Sanseverinos ran it, the younger brother slim then and handsome, distributing his carnations with a gracious smile just as he does now. For years I have made return visits to the vast and flourishing Gennaro's, for a good dinner, and for the sake of hearing the sweet white lie that greets the female client:

*"Ah, buona sera, Signora. Ben arrivata! Sempre più giovane! Sempre più fresca! Sempre più bella!"*

For a moment one believes it's true, and for a moment therefore, for a fleeting moment, it *is* true. . . . Bless those Italians.

The company of Norman Douglas during that autumn in England was some compensation for the loss of Monty's perpetually diverting society. Norman was looking for war work of some kind, which meant that he had plenty of time on his hands, and so had I, between shifts at the canteen.

Ribaldry was the basis of our friendship, and I don't know a better one. It is a solid foundation. Whether we were sitting under a tree in the strange little back garden of a pub somewhere near Strand-on-the-Green, or plunging through a swamp in the middle of Richmond Park on a pitch black night after a bottle of Tokay, or sitting late over dinner at Gennaro's, the tang of his salty conversation delighted me.

"Are you Satan, perhaps?"

"Perhaps."

A Cynic Philosopher?

Yet—"The business of life is to enjoy oneself; everything else is a mockery," he wrote in *How About Europe?* No Diogenes tub for him. Materialist; rationalist; Platonist; hedonist; any more "ists"? Yes, sentimentalist.

"Capri, my dear? Capri's hell nowadays. Don't expect me to come and stay with you there. No fear! I finished with Capri years ago. Years ago, my dear!"

Scarcely a year has passed since that remark in which Norman has not visited Capri. A post-card comes with Spadaro in his red cap or the ruins of Tiberius's villa on the back.

Just arrived. Perfect weather. WHY AREN'T YOU HERE?

A week or so later:

Have moved to Ischia. Capri is a filthy hole. Can't stand it any longer. Never going back.

ELIZA.

In November a wire from Monty brought me thankfully to Capri. A week's leave was worth that complicated journey across the Continent, and when I arrived he was already there, depressed to find Solitaria empty and Capri grey under the clouds of war.

For two thousand years Capri has been dedicated to pleasure, ever since, and possibly before, Tiberius built his twelve villas there and amused himself in his own way.

The island is thick with ghosts.

*Aria di Capri* is a good enough name for it, but in fact it is a sort of possession. Just as an empty room can hold the ghost of a bitter quarrel, so that its new inhabitants suffer a malaise they can't explain, Capri is haunted by ghosts of revelry and amorous sports of all descriptions. The dramatic quality of the scene, the magic of those moonlit or starry nights are enough to overwhelm the stoutest heart, but with the tumult of bygone festivals, orgies and saturnalia still raging, what hope is there of escape for any one? Capri is decidedly not suitable for a quiet domestic life, except possibly for the Capresi themselves, who take everything for granted.

For the first few months after Italy had entered the war it did seem as though the ghosts of pleasure had been laid on Capri, but this was mainly because the abrupt cessation of tourist traffic had brought life to a standstill. It was a temporary exorcism. Depression was at its lowest depths when Monty came for his week's leave that November.

But in the lamplight of Solitaria, with the apricot curtains drawn, we could sit round the fire listening entranced to the "fantastic improbability" of Monty's tales from Athens. F. W. Hasluck, a member of his staff, was there to supplement them. Capri wine and plenty of laughter. Monty was glorying in his work, and had decided that I should join him in the new year. Yes, I was thrilled at the prospect of being in Athens with him.

When he left, we thought it was a short farewell, so certain were we that I should go to Greece.

At the beginning of November Edward wrote:

Christopher is well in the thick of things, and

his Colonel gives him a high character. Think much of him, darling.

I thought much of Christopher for the duration of the war. He was perpetually in the thick of things, engaged in most of the bloodiest battles on the Western Front. By the grace of God, he came through it all without a scratch. His Colonel, to whom he was devoted, was killed at his side, and he spent two nights as Signalling Officer, laying and mending telephone wires in the open, under heavy fire, alone. For this he earned the Military Cross early in the war. He was, in fact, constantly in danger, less so in the later years when he was on the staff of General Pereira. His cheerful optimism and adaptability carried him along the first two years of the struggle, but I think he was finally as exasperated by the folly of it as the rest of us.

Capri cheered up in the new year of 1916. Every one was convinced that the war would be over in a few months. My journey to Greece was postponed, and as spring advanced it faded away altogether. The situation out there had become too uncertain, the sea voyage too risky.

I resigned myself to Capri, beautiful and smiling as it was in the freshness of early summer. The house enclosed me lovingly.

"Why go? Why go?"

Fate had brought me here, transported me from London, where I might still be working in a canteen and dodging Zeppelins and hating the darkness and gloom. Life became a fantasy. The summer blazed along, with the dry creak of the cicalas by day, the whistle of the *grilli* through the night. That was the

only nocturnal sound to be heard at Solitaria. On the roof, on the half-moon terrace, in the scooped-out garden, by moonlight, by starlight, dreaming there in the cool after the feverish heat of the day, I heard those *grilli*, those little grasshoppers making such surprising noises with their hind legs.

Sunrise and moonset together, sometimes. Opal and silver in the west; in the east the faint flush of the mounting sun. And when at last over Punta Campanella he appeared in splendour, flooding the sea with scarlet and gold, the ageing moon turned to a rose petal and faded into the sky.

There were letters from Greece, fantastic enough in themselves, letters from Christopher in Flanders, letters from Edward every week. And there was Norman Douglas himself for a month in the spring. He stayed at the Villa Behring, a haunted red barrack of which he only occupied two rooms. He was writing *South Wind*, and used to bring down what he had done to be typed on the L. G. Smith. I had hired a large and noisy Erard Grand from Naples, and this he used to play delightfully. Once he had studied music seriously in Germany, and his technique had rusted very little. Chopin, Bach (a lovely Chorale that no one ever plays was my favourite), and actually a number of hymn tunes which he played with enormous feeling, while I sang in my choirboy's voice, just faintly sharp all the time, "Lead Kindly Light" and the rest.

When he was gone there were pleasant and sometimes amusing people coming to Capri, escaping, rightly or wrongly, the horrors of war for a time. The death of Lord Kitchener in June brought a wave of hysteria to the English-speaking colony. The tragedy of it almost demanded silence, but instead,

there was a crescendo of chatter which I was not imaginative enough to recognise as the ebullition of violent emotion. When I was told that this was the final blow to England, that the war was as good as lost since Kitchener was lost, my imprudent tongue was loosed.

It was nonsense, I said. Kitchener's work was done, and his death would now make little difference to us.

There was a howl of indignation, and one woman who worshipped the character of Lord Kitchener burst into tears. That I should have said this at such a time outraged her sensibilities. She was perfectly right, of course, and I regretted it deeply as I made my way alone to Solitaria. As soon as I reached home I wrote her a note, apologising for having hurt her feelings, and admitting humbly that I had done very wrong. Carolina took it to her that night.

Next day the Piazza rang with my infamy. My note was being freely circulated.

"There you are. What did I say? She admits it! Read the letter yourself. Pro-German she is. Pro-German! Runs down our beloved Kitchener. Bows to that German cat on the Tragara! Etc., etc., etc."

The incident made a noise which penetrated the thick walls of Materita. I was asked to lunch.

"What have you been doing?" asked Dr. Munthe, chuckling. "I hear you are a pro-German. This is very serious."

I was the Scarlet Woman. I was everything that was abominable. "I am not pro-German, but I admit I can't suddenly hate a whole nation because their leaders choose to go to war against my own country. There is certainly something lacking in me. I am made wrong. I have no team spirit. I should be buried

alive or dead when great events like these come along. I am useless. I admit it. I am sorry."

Dr. Munthe flung an untidy parcel wrapped in crumpled tissue-paper on the table. It burst open, revealing a tangle of decorations, ribbons and medals.

"These were from Germany. They are going back to the Kaiser, who gave them to me. That is what I think about Germany."

I quite agreed about the Kaiser. If he were really responsible for this damnable war nothing was bad enough for him. But I hadn't the energy to hate all his subjects. Besides, what about the fraternising of troops at Christmas? That had to be crushed in a hurry, or where would the war be? You can't go bayonetting men with any enthusiasm unless you hate them, can you? And hate must be artificially induced, and kept pointing in the right direction, or who could tell what might happen to our rulers?

"Let me give you a piece of rosemary." This was Dr. Munthe's last gesture to visitors as they left Materita. Always from the same tree at the corner as you turned away from the long pergola steps to go out at the side garden door.

From the Villa Torricella came this warning note:

DEAR MRS. MACKENZIE,—As I wrote you that we would be at home as usual, *on Sunday*, I write to say that we have decided *not* to resume our Sunday afternoons, for the present—Sincerely,

SAIDEE WOLCOTT-PERRY.

That was my congé, and the end of the old ladies for us. We never saw them again. They had lost

nearly all their friends by now, and slowly their sun was setting among clouds of bitterness.

September came, and still we bathed and basked. We had rented a little house on the Piccola Marina beach for bathing, so most of the day I would spend down there, with lunch and siesta, finishing up at Morgano's before dinner. And then Solitaria, *Beata Solitudine!*

(The little house on the Piccola Marina was rented for seven years at a very reasonable price. So reasonable that at the end of the war, when there were plenty of visitors, the seven years presented a bleak prospect to our landlord. Right up against the house was a patch of shingle between high rocks. In this enclosure the fishermen of the Marina took to performing their morning exercises. It became the matutinal haunt of what seemed to be the whole Marina. This made the house entirely uninhabitable, and when we protested, our landlord shrugged his shoulders and said, what could he do? He could never catch them at it. Nothing could more effectively drive us out, and by then we wanted to get rid of the house, so every one was satisfied.)

*Beata Solitudine!* Now there were storms, and rheumatic headaches from too much bathing, melancholy, and not unnaturally a sense of desperate futility. On the 16th of September I went to Caterola and wandered round the paths Monty had made when we first came to Capri. They were all either neglected or, in the case of the long wide walk which had been bordered with irises, turned to corn, with only a narrow footpath left. Exigencies of war, of course, but the thought of all he had done to the place, and how little it had been appreciated was too much for me. My



head ached and throbbed. Despair settled upon me. What, what was the matter?

I went home and to bed. There was a letter from Monty. The leave he expected was farther off than ever. A letter from Edward too:

Mary's comment when she read your letter was "I didn't know Faith had any enemies." Sophocles comes into my head. "An enemy is so far to be hated as one who will love you again, and as for your friend, you must aid him so far as one who will not always abide with you." Rather heathenish, worldly wise.

An apt quotation, I thought, under the circumstances, and capable of universal application. I took three Bayer aspirins and prayed for sleep. Next day I was worse. An American friend came down and massaged my head. She had soothing hands and quiet movements. She stayed all day and at seven a telegram came:

Father dying.

Nothing more! That was what had been in the air. I had his letter of yesterday beside me. How could it be? I thought my head must burst now; such pain and such bitter tears. So far away, and never to see him again. Dying, not just ill. I sent a wire:

Shall I come home?

There was no reply next day, and my head throbbed on. People came and went and I lay collapsed. On

the 19th, Christopher's birthday, came the laconic reply:

Funeral to-morrow.

In the afternoon a terrific thunderstorm broke over the island. Rain poured in torrents down and in at the windows, thunder boomed and crashed and rumbled among the cliffs. Lightning was continuous and blinding; roads were impassable. However, Brooks came down in his goloshes. Every one who knew me had some idea of what Edward meant to me, but Brooks had the scholar's appreciation of the infinite value of that sane and youthful mind, poured out in letters which never failed those he loved. And it was not the end of his letters, for the day after he was buried another one came. . . .

Then I heard from my family.

He had been in the garden, engaged in his favourite occupation, weeding with a hoe, attacking the "rascals" with his usual zest, when the call for tea came. He had gone indoors, and there on the threshold, without warning, he had fallen unconscious, to pass, as Lily did, without pain or fear from this life.

A long obituary notice in *The Times* was headed:

DEATH OF MR. STONE  
Schoolmaster, Poet, and Scholar

It ends:

His own enthusiasm for literature, modern as well as ancient, he was always eager to communicate, and many who were boys at Stonehouse

## AS MUCH AS I DARE

must owe more than a little to the Sunday afternoon walks which he used to lead along the cliffs or on the seashore, talking freely of his own interests, and answering the questions that were showered upon him.

Soon I would be in London again, with Monty on a feverish fortnight's leave. And then back at Solitaria, under the spell, drifting along, until he was released altogether, on the verge of a breakdown—a long sick-leave which he spent writing *The Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett*, the first novel of Great War disillusion, to the music of Verdi, played by me on the noisy Erard Grand.

THE END





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